

Saul Bellow

A SERMON BY DOCTOR PEP

*In Bughouse Square, Chicago, before the brownstone length
of the Newberry Library, where he spends his days.*

Before long winter will be over, dear friends. Easter isn't far away. There is still hard ice protected by ashes in the corners but it will wash out by the same process that laid the moraines of glaciers over our great states. The old leaves are drying and skid-row is thinning out as the dead-looking are resurrected off the sidewalks and sent to be gandy-walkers in the little blue flowers of Montana, where the birds chirp like the sound of scissors and snip the air into beautiful streamers, and the butterflies drink up what is left of the porcupines who passed on happy in their sleep.

I would go myself if I were younger and had all my limbs to go with. (*Indicates his crutch.*) But many of you know the story of how I ransomed my body with my leg after the Skokie Valley crash of 1923, having heard the talk I give on Man and the Machine, which talk I do not aim to give this evening. But if I could do it, I would take off for Montana or the Black Hills, just from the need to refresh my heart on ground that hasn't been coated and cased and under feet and wheels for as long as North Clark Street. However, I am not eligible to be a section-hand. Natural selection has been rough on me—this dog-white hair growing over my head and out of my ears. I will have to be satisfied right here where I have done a long winter of study and thought in the Newberry reading room, among the nuns and antiquarians poring over walled cities and Celtic dreams. Antiquarians and young girls getting up assignments for Teachers' College—pale, hot-faced young girls whose laps were never meant for notebooks. I feel for the young woman with her thick-stuffed albatross briefcase which the word of a schoolboard will change into

the weight of *Stone-Mills Arithmetic* and three volumes of *Literature and Life*. Not the blessing of love to take it off her. And she will arrive in her small town for a second, deeper and worse enchantment and think even of the Newberry as one wall closer to freedom and mysterious hot love. But I will stay here and see if I can find a substitute for the little green winds of Spring in the pages of books and will keep on smelling White Castle hamburger-onions in place of section-hand stew.

Now since I've mentioned hamburgers, I'll lead with them straight into my subject of disease and health, and true and false nourishment, out of my readings in Galen and Hippocrates and even further back in time. First-off I want to say that I'm not going to discuss anything so obsolete as the effects of Dogstar rains or descending phlegm in humid natures; nor will you hear anything from me, more recent, for or against psyllium seeds or senna leaves for regularity, or yogurt and the parasites of carp for old age; or any of the stuff you hear from radio doctors about health-bread or the evil of polished grain and false, agenized bleached flour or digging your grave with your teeth. No, it's something else I have in mind, to-night. I recall, first of all, my old friend Dr. Julius Widig, whom you must all remember, a frequent speaker in this square while he lived and the author of *Reefer Rosie, the Tragedy of a Girl Bum*. Generous soul, we all respect his memory. Our old friend Dr. Widig when he was arrested in the first war for an open anarchist and strong-armed and given the broom-handle treatment behind by the mayor's squad, when his license was taken away from him and he was thrown into Joliet Penitentiary, he kept up his noble heart by healing the jailbird venerealees and came out a lot healthier than Ponce came out of the Florida swamps, nearly killed by his quest for elixirs. Yes, while more robust and better fleshed, gymnastical men ran off to embrace the sickness of Verdun, where all the bones still have not been gathered under crosses, he was hustled off to jail. And it was caring for the prisoners that saved his vital economy for him in spite of the war the state made on him with strong-arming and the hoosegow drearies. It was the miseries of other men that did him good. Now, am I calumnifying the mild old doctor? He didn't ask for them, no; he was too humane. But what is his example for us? Nothing new. Only that in health we are in the debt of a suffering creation. With

that, foremost, we have to settle. Think of the old tale of Pharaoh bathing his leprosy in the blood of Israel's children. If you picture him sitting evil in his basaltic tub, see his head like the head of a swimming snake, you are partly in error. You ought to see him sad, as anyone is taking medicine and treatments. Any way you want to pick this thing up you have layers and series. The welfare of the common rests on the beasts, and as for the greatness of the great, the perfect representations of happiness and satisfaction which we have had the get-up to make the image of democratic everybody, it was always felt to come from the thousands and millions underneath, the beasts and the lowly. The ignorant poor bringing their children to be cured of scrofula by the touch of a British queen—I see the pudgy-headed infant Sam Johnson carried all the way from Lichfield among them—brought them in that thought, to get back a little of their own from the heart-rich sovereign fed thick by them.

Spring and Easter make me think of these things, dear listeners. The slaughtered Osiris gets himself together again and his scattered body comes to life; the grave-cold Redeemer rises up; the tadpole shucks the tallowy, pond-bobbing egg and his tender feet grow scratchy, and the fat of life begins to sizzle. The new styles have been showing since February; we little dream of the love-raging cults that preceded when we see those sprays of cloth flowers worn in the parade or of the legs that trembled for the panting touch of Attis in the hobbled march of tight skirts. And pretty soon there'll be little cake and fudge lambs in the windows that the children will croon at and eat. Yes, eat the lamb made to eat. Why not? Is there any real love short of eating? Bite off the tail, the little feet, the head, and make inarticulate love with the hungry tongue and amorous teeth, learn biting love with the little pure divinity lamb. Have you heard the mother tell her little Tommy, "I could eat you up!" You have; she says it, but she does not gobble him like the cold-blooded guppy or the indiscriminate feasting sow. And we shudder when we read of poor Thyestes dished up his children unsuspecting by that hateful king and have deep horror and deep envy of his ignorant cannibal dinner because he has the tragic true love of assimilating his own into his own body again and returning them to the glue of his bones and the fat of his kidneys. Or turn your thoughts to eucharistic wine and wafers. "You shall eat my body and drink my blood"—terrible to

the blood-avoiding law of Moses. But consider it as an order to feel no blame and have an innocent appetite. In things like this the secret of health and eating is to be found. A Paschal lamb. To the ancient Greek islanders, a fish. And if Christ's blood ran for us, why shouldn't the blood of steers run, and why should anybody flinch at the butchering of the calves or the trussed pigs that go thrashing and squealing round on the big stockyard wheels in the south part of our great city? Now this is just the appropriate place for the question, for the threads are spun out here that lead to thousands of Minotaurs a day through pens and galleries, and if the knackers' hammers stopped falling there would have to be some other ground-note to hold up the harmony. But friends let us be careful. There is so much prosperity and fame out of packing that we dassn't think of the awful names of the Carthaginian or Canaanite demons or Moabitic Peors in connection with it unless we have something to propose and speak to a useful purpose. So remember what the subject is. Health of the person. Original vigor. *Mens sana in corpore sano*. And you see that I am no mock-duck vegetarian or nature-curer or Fletcherizer urging you to chew; nor a health-parson saying that consecration is good for the nerves and that the saints and apostles were pole-vaulters. Nor am I here to frighten the young men with warnings of gleet and morning-drop and other threats and terrors of the street-guide or admonish the girls not to take drugs tampering with their courses. No scares nor superstitions, nothing like that. I'm talking of nutrition, plain and simple, and the deep causes of good and bad health, and I began with hamburger meaning to explore why the shape of the creature is ground up—not only in hamburger but in its allies chopped-steak and salisbury steak, and other euphemisms of the menu as well, and in croquettes and hash—ground and hidden with the best formal art of Thompson's and Pixley's for the noon-hour ravenous, not to give an evidence of the living and a hint of obligation to reverence and indebtedness. Is that a deep offence, the beginning of sickness? Does that make cold tallow out of the fat which should be the grease of love? I believe so. For there is a bad conscience somewhere about it. The injurious part is that a reality is subtracted along the way and something spoiling creeps in. Things have to be accounted for in full by a demand of our nature, and in that respect the wild Melanesian and the Kalahari dwarf are in a

better state than we. The Mithraic communion of bread and wine and the totem animal masks of the cult, almost all we have left, are hidden in a little trimming of St. Peter's throne. The White Tower ketchup bottle is not enough of a symbol of the sacrifice of life and the true fact is that death is not farther but closer to us when we are so perfunctory and unbeholden, and the real and free presence of life is in the necessitous drink and the hungry bite of the man and woman who know how food is supplied and have met the debt of labor and acknowledgment.

As far as I am concerned, I know my debt. The one foot of my original two that touched the ground is shod in the hide of beasts; my coat is trimmed with the skin of them. I don't know what the fur of my collar is, wolf or badger, tickling my neck. It seems mostly like the anonymous hock-shop article that never had a parent or a birth and was never anything but the trimming of a garment. But when the thaw comes and I feel it against my skin, why it gets a little pungent of the cave and the forest from the heat of my body, and then I remember what it is. I remember the animals and that I am pieced together inside and out, from joint to strap and from liver to buttons by their favor. Because I am a prince of life, ladies and gentlemen? And the natural chief of the hierarchy, the speaking over the dumb? This I must be to deserve. Otherwise what excuse is there? I ask you it from my heart. Am I deserving? For I have to be.

Now, friends, some of you will be thinking of the rule of nature and will ask my opinion, for instance, of the tame cat eating her way wag-headed into a mackerel with her nice needles; somebody will direct me to the Lincoln Park Zoo and the whole bar-marked congress of brute life ten minutes by car from the main stem; and will mention for sure the wiry clinging mantis that gnaws off the head of her mate in their climax. Likewise we kill and devour. Which is all very well if you think of us only in nature. Yes, I feel the drum-bumps of the species in me, of all of them. I appreciate that I am not the star-browed Apollo measuring one noble foot of space between the eyes. I am even one leg short of the average stamp of Adam. But folks, I partake of everything in my own flesh; I strum on Venusberg and float in the swamp. I do a one-leg schottische along Clark Street and buff the friendly public with my belly. I stroll in the zoo

with my colleagues and ponder the throat-digging nails of the lynx and the pillars of the elephant; I sit in the Newberry and compassionate with the tender girls who have never felt anything warmer than a washcloth upon them. And I feel that I and all these creatures and persons are images of spirit, icons, symbols, versions and formations.

But if you disagree, let us see for a moment how we compare with the egg-born. You will admit, each and everyone, that they do not have to be guided and are never lost anywhere. I admire how the faintest light in the summer attic will bring the fine, secret mosquito quivering from a long distance to the screen, just as the faintest warmth of the gopher will fetch the rattler between the eyes and make him strike. And I marvel at the Guiana spider that takes the ants' disguise to perfection. But let me suggest to you, listeners, that he comes into the world instructed in mimicry and belongs to the cast of the giant creation that goes through a performance of days and ages without a falter and without a rehearsal. Whereas we, fallible and in need of instruction, train in a riot of boners and howlers; being creatures *and* more, having hopes of brilliancy, having dread of Acheron, hankering through endless series from the inane to the earth and around the earth from end to end, embracing everything with infinite desire.

Infinite, infinite! Is it the desire of subject creatures any more? No, it is not, this nonpareil longing. And, like everything else, it has its health. That is glorious. It has its disease, too, and that is to digest itself. Yes, we are the only ones who turn our appetite on ourselves, and the most hopeful and outward-gentle the most of all. Too gentle and abstaining to be predacious at large, with the humane eyes of civilized self-consumption. The plans of Jerusalem are open before them, but what haunts them is the eating mouth, the betrayal of mercy in their own teeth and the insubordinate part of them facing to Moloch and his capital.

What is this being gentle? Give me a little more time, everybody, and think of it. Ah, it's a tragic, tearful subject, and I am stripped naked when I come to it. A billion years of devouring are behind us; will we even them up with as many of love and compassion before the earthly time is up?

Don't take it amiss for frivolousness if I refer to the Walrus and

the Carpenter to begin with. The Walrus was sorry for the poor oysters. The carpenter ate without caring. But both of them wept like anything to see such quantities of sand. Why did they? Because civilization is never complete enough? In dead earnest, it is profound. The sand remains in spite of the maids and the mops. It creeps back. And the fish of first-times loiters offshore somewhere near our loftier thoughts. Each new generation has to be tamed to manners and tamed more than its remotest ancestor. The snakes have to be made to come and braid themselves symmetrical into the healer's caduceus, forsaking poison for benevolence, and everything lay itself out harmonious and nice.

But as the subjugation goes on and the City of Man arises, the martyrs multiply faster and faster. Such work cannot go forward without firm and earnest purpose, seriousness and hardness, and the proof of such by willingness to make sacrifices. Here the martyrs come in. There is no power without them, they must swarm. The young knight Curtius who threw himself horse and all into the gap in the Forum, there is your cleanest and simplest example, as the story makes it happen by heroic consent. The boys of best breeding the Mexican priests took the hearts from, there's another; or Iphigenia under the knife of her curl-bearded father, offered up for the sake of the bedoldrummed fleet. Still not like later excess. The mops of the maids are of human hair, and still the sand gathers and gathers. Beautiful Versailles and the shaped trees of Fontainebleau fed the dream of Robespierre, prepared to murder millions of his countrymen to see it real. And were the fierce moppers of Auschwitz inspired by their squared and polished home towns and the pleasant embroidery of the regulated Rhine? Remember, Baal was the lord of cultivation and humanized land, and he was the greatest danger to the desert-bred generation, in the eyes of Moses.

But I have to give over now, for I see Dr. Johannes waiting to address you on the single-tax and interpret the message of Henry George. I have only another word on gentleness, which for me is in the patriarch Abraham ready to take the life of Isaac on the angry mountain. He was tried where he was tenderest to learn what the worst was that indulgent love had to be ready for. Inhumane, the old man? Not for me. Not he. Not when he looked at the bone-enclosed head beside him, the mysterious shape between the boy's

wonders and thoughts and the free air of heaven. He knew his debt—and I can see nothing but honor in it—for the presence and continuation of life.

We can keep death too near us by secret care. It inhibits the bite, it poisons the mouthful, closes the digestion and sends us to an early grave.

I make way now for my colleague.

Sidney Hook

REFLECTIONS ON THE JEWISH QUESTION

Whatever Sartre's merit as a philosopher—not very considerable, in my opinion—his writings reveal a depth of psychological insight more rewarding than a library of tomes on scientific psychology. Why, despite these psychological gifts, Sartre writes such bad novels perhaps others can explain. Psychology, however, has its limitations when applied to historical themes, and all Jewish questions, except definitions of what constitutes a Jew, are historical. Sartre's "anti-semitic" and "Jew," authentic and inauthentic, are ideal psychological types based not on what most Jews and antisemites are but on the kind of Jews and antisemites literary people are interested in. In virtue of his phenomenological approach, all Sartre needs is just a few specimens to construct a timeless *essence* of Jewishness and anti-semitism.

For all its historical limitations, Sartre's book, *Anti-Semite and Jew*,* is unquestionably one of the most brilliant psychological analyses of the marginal Jew and the fanatical antisemite which has ever been published. That he has independently discovered conclusions which Kurt Lewin and Horace Kallen, who know infinitely more about the subject than he, reached many years ago, only adds to the measure of his achievement. Would only that he had kept to psychology. For when Sartre does discuss social and political matters he lapses into the most vulgar and sentimental kind of orthodox Marxism. Antisemitism is a "bourgeois" phenomenon—as if it were not found among peasants, in feudal society, among the nobility. It is a mythical representation of the class struggle. "It could not (*sic!*) exist in a classless society"—presumably by definition. Its presence in the Soviet Union

* Schocken Books. \$2.75.

(legally forbidden—to be sure) Sartre would probably explain as the result of capitalist encirclement and the existence of those terrible “cartels” which he regards as also responsible for the Marshall plan.*

In a curious way Sartre’s book supplements the politically acute and psychologically obtuse study Marx wrote on the Jews a century ago. Marx argues against Bruno Bauer’s demand that the German Jews give up their Jewishness as a precondition of being regarded as Germans and citizens. Sartre argues against French antisemites who insist that the Jews can never really become French because they can never cease being Jews. His answer is that the Jew can be just as good a Frenchman as the Gentile, and that after the social revolution, the Jews may assimilate themselves willingly, and become authentic Frenchmen. The naiveté of Marx’s solution—“The emancipation of the Jews is the emancipation of society from Judaism” (which is commerce)—is mitigated by his assumption that what distinguished the Jews would automatically evaporate in the strong sun of the political enlightenment.** A century later, and after Hitler, too, this naiveté is a little too much.

Economic competition or distress exacerbates oppositions. It intensifies antisemitism but it does not create it. It explains why a scapegoat is sought but not why one particular group is *always* the scapegoat in the West whenever any profound social change or affliction takes place. Is capitalism the common causal factor in Russian, Polish, English and Spanish antisemitism?

Even the radical movement is infected with antisemitism—conscious and unconscious. At the time of the Stalin-Trotsky feud most non-Jewish Stalinists used antisemitic arguments against the Trotskyists. On the West Coast I was asked by a Stalinist why all the Trot-

* The two countries of the world Sartre is most ignorant of are the U. S. and the U.S.S.R. For the position of the Jews in the Soviet Union, cf. two noteworthy articles, “The Soviet Partisans and the Jews” by Solomon M. Schwarz, *Modern Review*, Jan. 1949 and “Has Russia Solved the Jewish Problem?” by Harry Schwartz, *Commentary*, Feb. 1948.

** Marx did not understand that Jewish capitalism was what Max Weber called “pariah” capitalism and that the Jews played no important role as a group in capitalism “as a process of production” whose study became his life work. He never returned to the theme of his essay “On the Jewish Question” written when he was a young man of twenty-seven. In that essay he argues for the emancipation of society not only from Judaism but from Christianity and all other religions.

skyists were Jewish intellectuals. In the East during the period when Malcolm Cowley was writing literary criticism for the Stalinists in the pages of *The New Republic*, Communist Party fellow-travelers made no secret of their belief that the Trotskyists were a bunch of "neurotic New York Jews." Just about two years ago, Pierre Hervé wrote in *l'Humanité*: "It is not by accident that three quarters of the Trotskyist leaders are Jews."

I once asked a leading Communist who had broken with the Stalinists to explain as objectively as he could the source of this anti-semitism. He groped haltingly for an explanation. "It's a matter of superficial cultural differences." He then exclaimed in a burst of honest confession: "I must admit that even I become irritated when I see people in the subway pull Jewish newspapers from their pockets. I feel that if they are living here they really ought to become part of the culture." "Do you feel the same way," I asked him, "when people draw Greek, Russian, German or Italian newspapers from their pockets?" "Why, no," he replied wonderingly. "That's odd," he added, "I never thought about that before." He is still mystified.

Sartre is aware, however, that the causes of antisemitism are not to be found in the behavior of the Jews. That is why the theme of his book is more topical today than it was when it originally appeared. For since then, the actions and thought-ways, to some extent even the psychology, of many Jewish groups seem to be changing without any noticeable decrease in antisemitism.

Any careful observer of Jewish affairs is conscious of these transformations among the Jews since the end of the war. To a large extent they are attributable to the profound shock which followed the discovery that almost six million fellow Jews had been slaughtered by Hitler. That they died was one blow; how they died another; the way the rest of the world reacted to the news a third. It is safe to say that the Jews as a whole will never be the same again. As a historical event, the extermination of the greater part of European Jewry will take its place with the Exodus and the destruction of the Temple. Even if the brotherhood of man had followed hard upon the fall of Hitler, it would have taken a long time for the wounds to heal. As it is, these wounds are torn open afresh by every sign that the world does not feel it owes the pitiful survivors anything, and

by the multiplying evidences that antisemitism has now reached an intensity in some Western countries almost equal to that observed in Germany a few years before the Nazis came to power.

Some liberals and friends of the Jews are puzzled. After all, they point out, this is not the first time in recent history that millions of innocent human beings have been destroyed by despots. Without making comparisons between degrees of infamy and differences in the techniques of murder, Stalin has probably killed more people from the time of the man-made Ukrainian famine in 1932 to the present than even Hitler. When these events happened, and similar ones in China and India, the Jews were no more and no less indignant than anyone else. Why do they seem so “hysterical” now?

The answer is simple. When six million Jews are slaughtered, the remaining Jews cannot but feel uneasy about their own position; when six million Gentiles are slaughtered, the remaining Gentiles do not feel uneasy. Whether the feeling in the case of the Jews is justified—and I believe it is not—is hardly the point. That it exists is a sufficient explanation of the great differences in attitude, speech, and behavior of many Jews throughout the world, and not least in the United States.

In certain respects these differences are not desirable even from the standpoint of Jewish survival and the quality of Jewish life. A people that has, by and large, been rational and pacific now seeks by an act of resolution to be belligerent and to cultivate the *mystique* of action. The desperate courage and will-to-death-through-resistance which would have been appropriate throughout Europe—and not only in the last days of the Warsaw ghetto—in combating the Nazi extermination squads, is now on tap to meet difficulties that are honorably negotiable. It was not Hitler who was assassinated but Bernadotte. And the Jews have now created their own non-Jewish D.P.’s, more numerous than the remaining Jewish D.P.’s in Europe. Because the Nazis fooled them again and again, they have become overly suspicious of those who kept the Nazis at bay. Goebbels used to assert that the Jews were not as intelligent as they or the world believed because they persisted in misreading Hitler’s clearly expressed intentions with respect to them. To prove their intelligence now, many read Clement Atlee’s words in such a way that only a Nazi could have uttered them. And as for Bevin!

It is as if the Jews were out to prove that they are like everyone else—inconsistent, fanatical, atavistic. Even those Jews who are distressed by these changes, who prefer to look at Jews as Sartre sees them, “mild,” endowed with “a sense of justice and reason,” “spontaneous and warm,” full of “obstinate sweetness which they conserve in the midst of the most atrocious persecution”—even such Jews, despite themselves, feel a throb of satisfaction at the feat of Jewish arms in a world that has cast slurs over Jewish willingness or ability to fight. Some Jews—fortunately a minority—judge all issues of foreign policy not by their bearings on the preservation of democracy throughout the world but by the way in which the fortunes of the State of Israel are affected. And not unlike the fellow-traveling Christian clergyman, there has emerged the disingenuous Jewish rabbi who permits his name to be used by Communist Front organizations.

All this is reflected in cultural and theoretical matters. The same liberal Jewish periodical which denounces in unmeasured terms—“undemocratic,” “unconstitutional,” “utterly indecent”—the Mundt-Nixon Bill calling for the registration of subversive organizations plotting the overthrow of the U.S. government by force and violence grows lyrical over the Israeli Constitution that condemns as criminal any propaganda against democracy—a provision which in effect makes Plato’s *Republic* seditious literature. Opposition to any official Zionist measure, condemnation even of the Irgun, is sure to bring a raft of scabrous anonymous letters. A people of dissenters have become impatient of their own dissenters and have almost succeeded in cowing them. There has been an upsurge in religious orthodoxy in many Jewish communities outside of Palestine—an orthodoxy not a whit less superstitious than that of other religions. And as if to add a comic touch, the “new failure of nerve” is observable among some young literary Jewish intellectuals, who, looking enviously at the Church, are prepared to join the Synagogue if only Kafka is added to the Apocryphal Books of the Old Testament. One is tempted to characterize them, modifying a phrase of Horace Kallen’s, as “amateur Catholics.”

If Sartre is right, all this is in vain. It is a matter of profound unconcern to the antisemite what the Jews believe and how they behave—whether they are communists or democrats, pious or agnostic, aggressive or shy. The antisemite hates them all. The existence of the state of Israel will not diminish antisemitism. It will merely furnish the

antisemites with another charge. We can expect to hear references to Jews as "hyphenated Americans." Sartre here sees truly and sees what some Jews themselves do not see. It is pathetic to observe how many Jews seek to pin on other Jews, those who differ in some perceptible manner from themselves, the blame for a discrimination whose explanation lies not in them, save in the tautologous sense that if there were no Jews there would be no antisemitism, but in the beliefs and habits and culture of the non-Jews. A whole volume can be written about the illusions Jews harbor concerning the disabilities imposed upon them by public disapproval of *other* Jews—non-believing Jews or rich Jews or radical Jews or second-generation Jews or what not—and the resistance they set up to recognizing the truth that in the eyes of those who "don't like Jews" these differences are utterly irrelevant.

II

What, then, is antisemitism? This is Sartre's first question. What is a Jew? is his second. What is an authentic Jew? is his third. Sartre's metaphysics muddies all his answers but he has something psychologically illuminating to say about each question.

Antisemitism is not so much an opinion as a *passion*. This passion is not a result of a personal or direct experience with Jews but is a "predisposition" which lies in the psyche of the antisemite, his uneasiness about himself, his mediocrity. The idea that the antisemite has about the Jew is not explained by "any social fact." "It precedes the facts that are supposed to call it forth." Although Sartre contradicts this by his Marxist derivations of antisemitism, this is his deeper, underlying thought. He even goes so far as to say that, "If the Jew did not exist (today), the antisemite would invent him."

But why would he invent the *Jew* and not someone else? One would imagine that some historical answer to this question is necessary. Sartre boldly denies it. The *idea* of the Jew as a special and detestable creature must first be present in the antisemite before he lets historical facts influence him. Consequently "no external factor can induce antisemitism in the antisemite." It is an idea or passion that has no adequate cause in its object. *Whence*, then, does it spring?

Instead of answering this question Sartre gives us a phenomenology of the antisemitic consciousness. And here he is at his best. He

pictures the antisemite as a man who is afraid of the human estate, as a sadist with a "pure heart" who justifies infamies in a good cause, a coward and malcontent, a would-be murderer, who glorifies his mediocrity, and legitimizes his right to belong to the world by assimilating himself "to the permanence and impenetrability of stone."

Brilliant as all this is, it is overdrawn. It is too narrow. It does not recognize distinctions and degrees in an appropriate way. This is the psychology of the active antisemite who has either harmed Jews by act or libelous word or is aware that under favorable circumstances he would be happy to do it. But what of the much more numerous group who are aware that they have no use for Jews, who desire neither to buy from, nor sell nor rent to Jews, to hire them or compete with them, who at most can only be taxed with participation in a cold pogrom, and yet are free of the vicious traits detailed above? Sartre lets them off lightly. They are really not antisemites but mindless nonentities who unconsciously serve as the medium through which the active antisemites exercise power. Sartre falters at the point. His eloquence, as well as his insight, stops short. For there are so many of them. To account for *their* moral culpability, comparatively minor as it may be, he would have to face the question he evades all the time (except in a few hasty lines): Why are the Jews, of all possible pretexts, of all possible scapegoats, selected as the sacrificial objects of Western culture?

Before considering this question, let us note that in its fullness Sartre's psychological analysis applies only to the professional antisemite, to those who in a sense make a political and social career of antisemitism. But there is a significant group of antisemites to whom it does not apply.

It is true that in any competitive situation, where inner security or assured social status is lacking, *mediocrity* generates fear of personal failure and hatred of the successful competitor. Where Jew and Gentile are involved, the greater the fear, the more likely it is that the non-mediocre Jew will become the object of embittered hatred by the mediocre Gentile. The latter solidarizes himself with all the Gentiles in a contrived defense of their common interests against the insidious "plot" of the Jew, all the more insidious for being invisible, in order that probing concern about his own failure of achievement be averted from him. Mediocrity, a hopeless, fuming, nervous mediocrity, parti-

cularly when it burns with ambition for power or fame, is almost invariably antisemitic.

But there is still another type of antisemite who is barely touched by Sartre's psychological analysis. This is the antisemite who far from being mediocre, has a touch of genius. He is not a sadist or moral degenerate in the sense of Sartre's active antisemite. Nor does he belong among the mindless ones who constitute the latter's mass base. Yet he has provided a great deal of the ammunition for the vulgar advocates of extermination and made antisemitism a respectable sentiment in the salons, and among the literary hangers on of the genteel tradition, who fancy themselves liberal because they make exceptions for one "white haired boy" among the Jews they know.

What Sartre says applies to creatures like Hitler, Goebbels, Rosenberg and their corresponding type in other countries, Drumont, Mosley, Gerald Smith but not to figures like Schopenhauer, Wagner, Dühring, Houston Chamberlain, Proudhon, Bourget, Maurras, Sorel, Dostoyevsky, Henry Adams, Dreiser, Chesterton and Belloc—who, for all their gifts, have helped poison the little minds of Europe and America, and prepared the way for the easy credulities which, while dismissing the Protocols of Zion and the charges of ritual blood-murder, murmur: "After all, there must be something in it." The sensibilities of the Ezra Pounds are finer than those of the Himmlers, the stomachs of the Célines are weaker than those of the Streichers but is the objective meaning of their statements about the Jews so fundamentally different? Yet their psychology is certainly not the same. Every anti-semitic "genius" has a unique psychology. Even as social psychologies the antisemitisms of Central European clericalism, anti-Dreyfus French nationalism, German racialism, English snobbism, must be distinguished. Perhaps the psychology is not so important as that it has a common object.

A study of the literary history of the West reinforces the same point, to be sure, in a gentler and much more indirect way. The reasons are complex and vary somewhat from country to country but it is undeniable that the role assigned to Jewish characters in literature has been unedifying when not actually odious. What seems to me more telling is that despite their tremendously rich imaginative power, the depths of their compassion, and the range of their understanding, the great creative spirits in poetry, novel and drama have

never treated the tragic theme of Jewish experience in the modern world in a manner befitting its universal human significance.

Time and again Sartre tries to bring his analysis into line with what he conceives the Marxist position to be by pressing into use a series of sociological banalities. Having read in Communist literature that the intellectual is more undisciplined (i.e. more inclined to question Party Dogma) than the worker because he has not been educated by the compulsions of the processes of production, Sartre believes he can show why antisemitism is present in some classes and absent in others. "Shaped by the daily influence of the materials he works with, the workman sees society as the product of real forces acting in accordance with rigorous laws." That is why workers and engineers are not antisemites. One wonders how many workers and engineers Sartre knows. In Germany and the United States the engineering profession was probably the most antisemitic of all. And it is a myth that the workers are more "disciplined" than the intellectuals. It is only when the Communists have established job control that they can keep the workers in line. If the behavior of the intellectuals in Western Europe and the U.S., during the last fifteen years is studied, it will be found that an amazingly large number of them jump to the crack of the Communist whip on matters of belief with far greater enthusiasm than the workers.

There is ample evidence to show that antisemitism is present in every class in Western society from top to bottom. There are, to be sure, variations in the intensity of its expression but they perhaps are more significantly correlated with *the number* of Jews which a given group encounters than with the degree to which it deals directly with the "material" world. Professor Philip Frank, a shrewd observer, tells us that the German students who put up the greatest resistance to Hitler were drawn from the faculties of pure science and philosophy which specialize in "abstractions," and were not disciplined by direct contact with the material world.

There is no one cause of antisemitism, or of any other mass movement, but it is possible to find certain constant factors which are present, in all its manifestations in diverse countries, conditions and times. These indicate that antisemitism is not so much a bourgeois phenomenon as a Christian phenomenon, that it is endemic to every Christian culture, whose religions made the Jews the eternal villain

in the Christian drama of salvation. Sartre mentions this only to dismiss it. It was once true but is no longer true. Again his psychology is better than his history. "Have we ever stopped to consider the intolerable situation of men condemned to live in a society that adores the God they have killed? Originally, the Jew was a murderer or a son of a murderer—which in the eyes of a community with a pre-logical concept of responsibility amounts inevitably to the same thing—it was as such that he was taboo. It is evident that we cannot find the explanation of modern antisemitism here. . . ."

No, not *the* explanation but one which goes a long way to explain the *persistence* of antisemitism in a world that recognizes the difference between Jew and non-Jew, and in which the Christian dogma—Sartre rightly calls it a legend—that the Jews killed Christ is still taught at some time or other to almost every non-Jewish child. And it is the child who conspicuously lives by the pre-logical concept of responsibility. Even when the legend fades out of the focus of consciousness or belief, the natural horror and resentment, the curl of repulsion and hateful rejection, leave scar-tissue deep in the unconscious which bursts into angry infection later in adult life often to the surprise of the carrier. This does not have to be universally true to be generally true. There are exceptions. The community, too, has its cultural scar tissue—e.g., the use of the term "Jew" as an epithet of disparagement—which may act as host to any passing evil germ. And there obviously cannot be a germ-free life. This is not past history but present history, and its meaning is reinforced by the findings of modern psychiatry.

There is, of course, an antisemitism which precedes Christianity; and there is, and probably will continue to be, an antisemitism in Moslem countries. But these antisemitisms are of the same kind as oppositions between Moslem and Christian, Christian and pagans, or between Christians of different sects. They are not so integral to one another as antisemitism is to the Christian epic.

That is why it is safe to predict that antisemitism will endure as long as orthodox Christian religious education which pictures the Jew as a decide. That is why, for genuine democrats, religion must be a private matter in fact as well as profession, why secular humanism and not Christian humanism is a safer, as well as truer, philosophy for democratic life. That is why every revival of religious orthodoxy,

every manifestation of intense *public* concern with the *truth* of religious dogma—to which some foolish literary Jewish sophisticates seem eager to contribute—churns up the already troubled waters of secular liberalism with dangerous historical sediment. That is why it becomes necessary to distinguish between kinds and degrees of antisemitism, and avoid the generous illusions of Sartre that everyone's life is at stake when any Jew is threatened in any way anywhere. The Jews, I am sure, would be willing to settle for much less than this Utopian universal brotherhood—for security and justice under a common law for free men. They do not ask to be loved, nor even that people cease feeling prejudices which in a free society everyone is entitled to—including Jews. Legislation against certain discriminatory practices is legitimate but one can no more legislate against social and personal prejudice than one can make all lies actionable at law.

“Antisemitism leads straight to National Socialism,” declares Sartre. This is preposterously and dangerously false, else all the Jews would by now have long since been dead.

III

The second question: What is a Jew? is one which Sartre answers correctly but for the wrong reasons—correctly, insofar as he says “a Jew is one whom other men consider a Jew”; wrong, because he suggests that there are distinctive Jewish traits, physical and psychological and cultural which are created by this pejorative consideration. The problem deserves some independent analysis. Nothing is to be gained from that pose of profundity which affects a deep metaphysical approach to the question of what is a Jew, illustrated in the procedure of one Jewish philosopher, not noted for his modesty, who, with unctuous cheek, writes: “No one is a Jew who is not ethical, reflective and modest.”*

What definition of the Jew is most adequate to the various usages of the term “Jew” in current life? There are approximately five million Jews in America. Nothing is so absurd as the attempt to find some one trait, or combination of traits, which will explain the usage of the term “Jew” or which marks off Jews from non-Jews. Whether it be religion, history, culture, language or political aspira-

* *Commentary*, October, 1946.

tion, every criterion breaks down in the face of the multiplicity of facts concerning the beliefs and behavior of those who call themselves Jews or are called such by others.

Religion, for example, is not a differentiating factor. Those who subscribe to a particular form of Jewish religion still regard those in the Jewish community who reject this form—or any form of religion—as Jews. What is even more to the point, the non-Jewish community does not regard religion as a differentiating factor. It does not distinguish between religious and irreligious Jews or believe that “Jewishness” is washed away in the waters of baptism. I recall being asked, during the thirties, to join an organization which called itself, “The Society for the Help of Non-Aryan (!) Christian Refugees.”

What is true for religion is true for any other trait of differentiation—physical appearance, psychology, culture, language, political faith. This may be roughly established as follows. Take any trait “x” or combination of traits, “x^s” which is presented as *the* mark of Jewishness. Classify all those who are regarded or who regard themselves as Jews, East or West, North or South, in an order ranging from those who manifest the least amount of x, or x^s, to those who display the most. It will then be found that the difference between Jews who possess the least and the most amount of x, or x^s, is greater than the difference between most Jews and most non-Jews in respect to this trait. This is clearly so in the United States, and if on a world-scale we include Jews in the fastness of Yemen, the Caucasus, and Abyssinia it is even clearer.

Some think that they can define the Jew in terms of origin as one whose ancestors were of the Hebraic religious faith. The difficulty with this is twofold. There are some who are not regarded as Jews, and who do not regard themselves as Jews, whose ancestors many years ago were of the Hebraic faith. Second, how many ancestors professing the Jewish faith does one need—one grandparent, two or three, one great-grandparent, two or three? Every decision is purely arbitrary. No wonder an antisemitic mayor of Vienna, when taxed with close friendship with Jews, retorted: “*Wer Jude ist, dass bestimme ich.*”

Paradoxical as it may sound, the only formal definition of a Jew that can be given which will do justice to the various ways in which the term “Jew” is used is this: “*A Jew is anyone who for any*

reason calls himself such or is called such in any community whose practices take note of the distinction." Let any Catholic Irishman or Boston Brahmin or Southern aristocrat move into a community in which he is unknown and pretend he is Jewish only to the extent of *saying* he is Jewish, and he will be treated like all other Jews including those who do not *say* they are Jewish but whom the Gentile community regards as Jews.

One may quarrel with the adequacy of the definition but not with the facts which suggest it. There is no trait or dogma or practice common to all Jews who recognize themselves as such or who are recognized as such by others. What they have in common is a condition or situation of exclusion from one or another pattern of social life, an exclusion which ranges from minor annoying restrictions in good historical weather to major discriminations in bad. What unifies them is nothing positive but, by and large, a common historical condition which, whether they like it or not or whether they like each other or not, cancels out in the eyes of others their not inconsiderable differences.

But what nonsense to say with Sartre that the Jew has been "poisoned" by these restrictions and pressures to the point that he lacks "a metaphysical sense" (would it were so!) and a feeling for "the vital values." The leaders of positivism from Hume to Mach, from Russell and Poincaré to Carnap, have not been Jews, and not a single great pragmatist—Peirce, Dewey, James and Schiller—is Jewish. Sartre has to convert Bergson's anti-intellectualism into rationalism, and the intuitionism of Spinoza and Husserl into intellectualism to make them fit his scheme. Yet every Jewish thinker of note in Western Europe owes more to his non-Jewish contemporaries and predecessors for his ideas than to his status, willing or unwilling, as a Jew. And as for movements that are distinctively Jewish like Hasidism and Zionism, which *can* be explained by the social and cultural pressures of Western Christendom, they are as far removed from rationalism as anything can be. Sartre is almost ready to agree with the antisemite that the Jew as such has certain obnoxious traits but mitigates the charge with the counter-impeachment: "You made him so." No group of people so heterogeneously constituted, who have so many assorted reasons for affirmatively or negatively expressing their "Jewishness," can be pressed into one characterological type.

IV

There are many kinds of escape which individual Jews try to make from the common situation of loose negative togetherness which the Christian culture of the West imposes upon them. It is in his account of the psychology of these Jews that Sartre writes his most powerful and poignant pages. But his psychological insight is obscured by an untenable distinction he makes between the "authentic" and "inauthentic" Jew—which I wish to discard in order to use these terms in a different sense. For Sartre "authenticity consists in having a true and lucid consciousness of the situation, in assuming the responsibilities and risks that it involves, in accepting it in pride or humiliation, sometimes in horror and hate." Although he pretends that no normative connotation is attached to "authentic living," he quite clearly indicates that the person who lives inauthentically lacks courage and dignity. Whatever else a man should be, he should be authentic! But this is obviously wrong. "A true and lucid consciousness of the situation"—by all means and in all situations. But whether one should *accept* the situation—why, that depends upon the situation. If one is a thief, a sadist, an antisemite, or a Communist Party functionary—it would be far better if he lived inauthentically. And if in any situation, one carries out the responsibilities and risks it involves with "humiliation" or "with horror," this is *prima facie* evidence that he has not accepted it.

The "authentic Jew" for Sartre is one "who lives to the full his condition as Jew"; the "inauthentic Jew" is one who denies it or attempts to escape from it. But to live to the full his condition as a Jew, according to Sartre, is "quite simply to lay claim to and live in the situation of a martyr." Now one may praise an individual for living like a hero or martyr; but one cannot condemn a human being for not living like a hero or martyr. More important, there are many ways in which a Jew can affirm his Jewishness without being a martyr. Sartre says nothing about this because he does not recognize the plural ways in which those who are recognized as Jews by Gentiles *can* live as Jews. What he is really concerned with is the Jew who is recognized as such by the Gentile community but who refuses to admit to himself, and sometimes to others, that he is so recognized and that consequences flow from that recognition. As I use the term "inauthentic" it applies

only to the Jew who imagines that he can identify himself with non-Jewish experiences so completely that he can avoid the pains and penalties and discriminatory regard suffered by other Jews whose affirmations and behavior seem to him to be the main source of disabilities imposed upon Jews. According to Sartre, the Jew who is a socialist or liberal or anything else that a Gentile can be is an inauthentic Jew—a fantastic assumption which can only make sense on the notion that there is a metaphysical Jewish essence irreducibly different from a non-Jewish essence, so that the Jew appears to be another *kind* of human being, perhaps not a human being but something above or below him.

In describing the psychology of what he calls the “inauthentic Jew” among Gentiles, Sartre does not distinguish between the psychology of what I call the “inauthentic” Jew—the Jew who desires, so to speak, to pass himself off as a Gentile, and the psychology of what I call “the authentic Jew” who accepts himself as a Jew for any reason whatsoever. *La mauvaise foi* or inverted self-consciousness, as Sartre describes it in the few illuminating pages of his turgid and boring *L'être et le néant*, is different in both cases.

The “inauthentic Jew,” in my sense, is afflicted with an additional dimension of self-consciousness. No matter how impeccable his conduct, he is always on guard in predominantly non-Jewish company, exquisitely conscious of the possibility that at any moment something he says or does will be regarded as a telltale sign. He feels that there are some things that are appropriate for him to do, and others which are not appropriate, *merely* because he is regarded as a Jew. Whether he is active in public life or in the professions, wherever his words or deeds affect his fellowmen, he is pursued by a nagging consciousness of the specific effect activity as a Jew has on others. In his utterances he must think not only of whether what he says is true or false, but of how, as coming from *him*, it will be received. He finds that he is bothered by what Jews do or leave undone in a way his own attempted escape makes it difficult for him to understand. He develops a guilty sense of Jewish responsibility despite the absence of any consciousness of Jewish loyalty. When he is pretty far down in the scale of creation, he does not overhear antisemitic remarks, and touches bottom when he regales the company with antisemitic jokes, told with an air that suggests the difference between himself and other

Jews, usually too subtle for others to see. Sometimes, without any religious faith, he embraces another religious faith. There are very few inauthentic Jews of this kind. They are really inauthentic people. The main problem of the authentic Jews is to find some rational basis or ideal fulfillment of their authenticity. Sartre is no guide here.

The genuine problem which confronts those who are regarded as Jews in the modern world is whether they should regard themselves as Jews, and what meaning they can give to their lives as Jews once they acknowledge, as elementary decency and dignity demand, that in some sense they accept themselves as Jews. This is a problem of tremendous complexity just because there is no one thing that constitutes Jewishness and because of the ideological imperialism of so many different Jewish groups which seek to impose their own particular conception of Jewish life upon all other Jews. Before discussing this question, I wish to indicate how the problem arises.

Perhaps the best way to do this is to relate one of my experiences with Jewish and Gentile youth in many institutions of learning. Plato's *Republic* is an ideal introductory text in philosophy and I have always read it with my classes. In the concluding book of the *Republic*, and as a profound commentary on his Utopia, Plato relates an interesting myth about a Greek, named Er, who was left for dead on the field of battle. Er is transported to the meadows of the other world where he observes how the souls of those about to be born anew pick out their future lots on earth before they drink of the waters of forgetfulness from the river Lethe. After a discussion of the significance of this myth in Plato's *Republic* and an analysis of the idea of immortality, I would invite (I no longer do so) the students to partake in a kind of extra-philosophical homework exercise to motivate the next assignment. They were asked to list on one side of a card their sex, place of birth, religious origins, vocational interests and other information they considered relevant to the kind of person they were. On the other side, they were asked to indicate under corresponding heads, what they would choose, if, like the souls in the Platonic myth, they could determine their lot in a future reincarnation on earth. The entries were anonymous, and all students entered into the spirit of it although the results were never disclosed. The results, however, were very instructive. For example, all students want to be born again with the same sex in their next reincarnation.

The only exceptions were those girls whose vocational choices indicated that they hoped to become physicians or engineers. They wanted to be reborn men. But more significant for present purposes was the fact that the overwhelming majority of Jewish students did not want to be born again as Jews but as something else—"no religion," "agnostic," "pagan," "Protestant" (mostly Unitarians with a few scattered Episcopalians), "nothing that would be a burden or be discriminated against"—were some of the typical responses. Not a single Gentile student ever wanted to be born Jewish.

This is no more an expression of "inauthenticity" in Sartre's sense than the desire to be born in a better age. But it does indicate a profound *malaise* on the part of Jewish youth. Sometimes it takes an acute form. Over the years I have met numbers of young Jewish men and women who wanted to know why they shouldn't change their name, why, if a job or life career was at stake, they shouldn't deny their origins. "After all," they complain, "we don't conform to, or believe in, anything distinctively Jewish." They wanted to know from me as a professor of ethics why it was wrong for them to seek to escape punishment for a condition for which they have no responsibility. It was not hard to point out that for most of them escape was practically impossible, that where it was possible the psychological costs were usually too burdensome, and that morally it was intrinsically degrading to capitulate to irrational prejudice and deny kinship with their own fathers and mothers who, often against heroic odds, had courageously kept their integrity and faith whatever it was. Except for one or two cases it turned out that these young men and women were content to remain Jews because they were fundamentally decent, not because they had any clear conception of what made them Jews.

This feeling of ambiguity and negation towards Jewish existence is characteristic not only of certain sections of Jewish youth but even of greater numbers of their elders, particularly in the United States. Many American Jews have acknowledged themselves as Jews for the sake of their Jewish brethren in distress. Many more have become concerned with their Jewishness for the sake of their children in hopes of providing them with psychological security and a sense of historical belonging with which they can meet the shocks of discrimination and rejection without neurosis. The Jewish child as a rule experiences the impact of scorn, hostility and opprobrious rejection

during his tender years. Sartre has some remarkable passages on this theme. It is difficult for any one not acquainted with specific cases to appreciate how deep the bewildered hurt goes into the psyche of the child, and how often these frustrations express themselves in tensions toward his parents, the innocent cause of the child's plight, or in a tortured silence that gives rise to self-doubt, and sometimes self-hatred. Most parents find it much easier to carry their own burdens of suffering than to stand by helplessly in the presence of their children's agony. That is why so many Jewish parents, especially in this neurotic-conscious age, seek eagerly to supply some consciousness of historic or contemporary Jewish association. But they avoid facing frankly the question of what their own Jewishness consists in, and how it is related to the Jewish and world scene.

It is at this point, usually, that a quest for definitions begins and Jews cast around desperately for some conception or clear formula which will express "the essence" of their Jewishness. The quest is not only fruitless but foolish. It is a capitulation to the muddy metaphysics of the antisemite.

Far wiser, it seems to me, is to recognize the historic fact of Jewish existence, the plural sources of Jewish life, and its plural possibilities. No philosophy of Jewish life is required except one—identical with the democratic way of life—which enables Jews who for any reason at all accept their existence as Jews to lead a dignified and significant life, a life in which together with their fellowmen they strive collectively to improve the quality of democratic, secular cultures and thus encourage a maximum of cultural diversity, both Jewish and non-Jewish. Such a philosophy recognizes that there is no dignity in denying one's origins or in living as if they were something to be apologetic about. It recognizes that morally, even more significant than acceptance of one's origins are the *fruits* of such acceptance, what one does with it, what one makes it mean, what comes out of it.

This is not the place to discuss the various "positive solutions" that have been offered as a basis for Jewish life. I shall return to them on another occasion. Meanwhile I permit myself a preliminary comment.

One solution, very unpopular among Jews today, is the universalist solution in which the individual thinks of himself as a Jew

by unfortunate accident but as a human being by enlightened choice. He usually looks to some form of universal democratic socialism in the future where the differences between Jew and non-Jew will forever disappear. This dream has its noble features, but it overlooks the fact that human beings live as Jews and non-Jews here and now and will continue to do so for a long time to come; that the dream itself is based upon the acceptance of differences among men and not on the hope of an undifferentiated unity; and that the microbes of antisemitism infect even movements which do not officially allow for its existence. The dream still has its uses as a guide in some ways but not as a home.

If it is pruned of its Utopianism and its failure to understand that the ethics of democracy presupposes not an equality of sameness or identity but an equality of differences, much of the universalist view still has a large measure of validity which Sartre, for one, completely ignores in his caricature of the attitude of the liberal and democrat towards the Jews.

According to Sartre the man of democratic principle, although a better person than the antisemite, is just as hostile to the Jew as a Jew. He wants him to disappear into the abstract universal, *man*, and annihilate himself as a concrete, historical individual. Whereas the antisemite "wishes to destroy the Jew as a man and leave nothing in him but the Jew, the pariah, the untouchable," the democrat "wishes to destroy him as a Jew and leave nothing in him but the man, the abstract and universal subject of the rights of man and the rights of the citizen." To the Jew, therefore, Sartre concludes, "there may not be so much difference between the antisemite and democrat."

No, not much difference except between death and life, between *Mein Kampf* and the Statute of Virginia for Religious Liberty. Now we know what surrealism in logic is! Because *the man* does not exist, Sartre tells us with a gesture of rigorous thinking, therefore only particular kinds of men exist. But the sense in which *the man* does not exist is precisely the sense in which *the French-man*, *the Ger-man*, *the Jew*, and *the antisemite* do not exist either. A sub-class is just as much of an abstraction as a class. Only individuals exist. But whether they should exist as Jews or Gentiles, as Catholics or Protestants or humanists, as Italians or Americans, as existentialists or as philosophers (in the etymological sense), should be, according to the democratic

philosophy, *a matter of voluntary choice*. If individuals exist, they must exist as something. This is an analytic statement. But that they must continue to exist in the same social and cultural status in which they are born is a piece of antidemocratic presumption. The democrat wants to give all individuals the right to freely determine themselves as Jews or Gentiles, as citizens of one country or another, as cultural heirs of Socrates or Aquinas or Dewey. He no more wants to destroy the individual Jew than the individual Gentile. He wants only to destroy those individuals and social institutions which seek to deprive human beings of their power of uncoerced choice. This is what is perennially valid in the liberating ideas of the French and Anglo-American Enlightenment which Sartre has renounced for a noisome mess of Heideggerian anguish and neo-Marxist historicism. He is a better man than his doctrine because he lacks the courage of his confusions.

Randall Jarrell

THE ISLAND

"While sun and sea—and I, and I—
Were warped through summer on our spar,
I guessed beside the fin, the gull,
And Europe ebbing like a sail
A life indifferent as a star.

"My lids were grating to their close,
My palms were loosening to die,
When—failing through its drift of surf,
Whale-humped, its beaches cracked with salt—
The island gave its absent sigh.

"Years notched my hut, my whiskers soughed
Through summer's witless stare: blue day
Flickered above the nothingness
That rimmed me, the unguessed abyss
Broke on my beaches, and its spray

"Frosted or salted with its curling smile
The printless hachures of the sand
Till I saw Europe, naked in its surf,
Open to my barbed limbs the leagues
Of its dark blood, the sweet moon wet with bars

"The locks that glittered to the sighing wharves,
The snowman kissed my entrails like a wolf.
Along the windows where the puddings blazed
My heart trudged rattling its red beads—
Corn popped, the goose gushed grease; my tears danced down

"Like snowflakes to the dreaming town,
The skier plunged like a gannet to my hug,
And the trolls' hoard sparkled at my icy feet.
All this I dreamed in my great ragged bed,
The drifts rolled from my rooftop to the stars,

"And I tossed, sweating, in my wife's thin arms
Or so I dreamed. The dawn's outranging smile
Curled through my lashes, felled the märchen's wood,
The sun stripped my last cumulus of stars,
And the sea graved all the marshes of the swan.

"So, so. The years ticked past like crabs
Or an hour inched out to heaven, like the sea.
One day, by my black hand, my beard
Shone silver; I looked in astonishment
And pinched my lean calves, drawn with many scars,

"With my stiff fingers, till the parrot called
In my grum, quavering voice: *Poor Robinson!*
My herd came bleating, licked my salty cheeks;
I sobbed, and petted with a kind of love
These joys of mine—the old, half-human loves

"That had comforted my absent life
I have dreamed of men, and I am old.
There is no Europe."

The man, the goats, the parrot
Wait in their grove for death; and there floods to them
In its last thundering spray, the sea, the sea!

Allan Dowling

**DOROTHY
AND THE DELIGHTS OF MARRIAGE**

An afternoon in October;
the sunlight came into the room.
From the bed where we were lying
I could look out thru the half-drawn curtains
and see the trees of a park,
the Jardins du Roi Albert I^{er} in Nice.
The weather was still warm,
and the window was open.
We could hear the sound of motor horns,
and the occasional jangle of a tram
in the nearby rue de France.
Over the tree-tops in front of me
the gay dome of the Jetée Casino
lifted its mock-Byzantine gladness
against the blue of the sky.

We had been married more than a month,
and I had only recently found the key,
or, rather, the combination,
to unlock those sudden springs of feeling
that lie hidden in the body;
for I am slow to learn,
and love is an art as deep as dancing,
and as difficult as music.
Dorothy was asleep beside me,
and I didn't dare move,
as my arm was under her head.
I lay still and watched her,
noted her quiet breathing,

and thought how strange and stupid it was
that I, a poet, would be forbidden
to describe our making love.
One of the most beautiful of all the arts,
and, after cooking, certainly the most necessary,
was taboo, as if we were still savages.

But in the better times to come,
or so I thought,
all this will certainly be changed.
Pleasure will have forgotten prudery,
peace violence, and joy will grow like grass.

In the late and lovely evening of the world,
when men have tired of their idiot labor,
their endless building up and tearing down,
their senseless wars, their passions about nothing,
then will the human race, grown wise at last,
cease wandering in effort's barren land,
and turn once more to Eden. South we'll go,
withdrawing from all difficult northern places;
and if an angel with a sword still bars the way,
we'll not be fooled by his official frown;
why, one warm kiss will make him smile, and turn,
and take us by the hand, and lead us in.
Our poor first foolish Adam never knew this trick,
so lost his paradise forever;
but the last Adam will be gay and knowing,
will laugh at dull, unnecessary things,
and hold supreme, above all earthly skills,
all other arts of men,
the craft of love that leads us home again.

Philip Toynbee

THE NOVELS OF HENRY GREEN

A Golden Age in literature might be defined as a period in which there was no *necessary* struggle between a writer and his medium. In the first half of the seventeenth century English writers could say what they wanted to say in a language which was naturally both apt and beautiful. It is equally true that English politicians spoke with a natural eloquence which should be distressing to their modern counterparts. Whatever may be said about the English language in our own time, it is bitterly clear that it no longer offers itself as a willing bride but cowers coyly and unalluringly behind an armory of chastity belts. Jean Paulhan discovers the same intractability in modern French, and he has invented a useful term to describe one method of approaching the recalcitrant and unappetizing victim of our passion. The Terrorists are those writers who confront their language as a wrestler confronts his adversary, knowing that they must twist it and turn it, squeeze it into strange shapes and make it cry aloud, before they can finally bring it to the boards. An opposite view is provided by the few surviving dandies among us, and was perhaps most eloquently expressed by Mr. Logan Pearsall Smith. To them the present English vocabulary is like a box of delicious sweetmeats, which may be culled one by one in delicate fingers and exquisitely melted on the tongue. Yet another, and perhaps the predominant view among modern novelists, is that the language of contemporary speech must be directly transcribed into literature, since any deliberate avoidance or transmutation of it will lead inevitably to something either dead or at best unnatural. Finally there remain among us a tiny band of archaists who are so shocked by the present condition of their language that they prefer to ransack the past for words and word formations which seem to them more vivid and more accurate.

During the last fifteen years a majority of our respected novelists have belonged to the third of these categories.

He had only, he told himself, to find a girl; there must be hundreds waiting to be picked up on a Whitsun holiday, to be given a drink and taken to dance at Sherry's and presently home, drunk and affectionate, in the corridor carriage. That was the best way, to carry a witness round with him. It would be no good, even if his pride had allowed him, to go to the station now. They would be watching it for certain, and it was always easy to kill a lonely man on a railway station. . . .

Mrs. Barton Trafford had a grand time, but she did not get above herself. It was useless indeed to ask him to a party without her; he refused. And when she and Barton and Driffield were invited to a party together they came together and went together. She never let him out of her sight. Hostesses might rave; they could take it or leave it. Usually they took it.

If Brenda had to go to London for a day's shopping, hair-cutting or bone-setting (a recreation she particularly enjoyed) she went on Wednesday because the tickets on that day were half the usual price. She left at eight in the morning and got home soon after ten at night. She traveled third class and the carriages were often full, because other wives on the line took advantage of the cheap fare.

His hysterical fury infected me suddenly. Stepping back I flung the door to with a violent slam, hoping to catch his thrust-forward, screaming face on the point of the jaw. But there was no impact. His voice stopped like a gramophone from which the needle is lifted. Nor did he utter another sound. As I stood there, behind the closed door, my heart pounding with anger, I heard his light footsteps cross the landing and begin to descend the stairs.

These four quotations are taken (as nearly at random as any critic ever takes a quotation) from four extremely well-known novels written by four of the most respected novelists of our time.* Now it is obviously possible to make a distinction between these voices; they are about as distinct as the different voices of real people in a conversation. The first quotation is fluent and easy and direct; the second is ironic; the third is flat and rather tired, and the fourth is quick, violent and vivid. No one of them has been chosen for any

* 1) *Brighton Rock*, by Graham Greene. 2) *Cakes and Ale*, by Somerset Maugham. 3) *A Handful of Dust*, by Evelyn Waugh, 4) *Mr. Morris Changes Trains*, by Christopher Isherwood.

obvious fault in the writing, and by our usual standards there is nothing particularly wrong with any of them. They seem to do their different jobs well enough; they carry the reader along without either offending or surprising or boring him. Yet, distinguishable though they may be, how intimately they share a lack of *all* distinction in the secondary and nobler sense of the word. They are the work of journeymen, smooth, yarning voices, telling a good story over the port.

There is no cause to write any further here about the two small categories of the Dandies and the Archaists. They have played a negligible role in the modern English and American novel. The real linguistic war is being fought between novelists of the kind I have quoted—whom we might not unfairly call the Men in the Street—and the smaller but formidable band of Terrorists. The Terrorists are, by their nature, a diverse and unwieldy category. All they have in common is that they have made a conscious assault on their linguistic medium. Some have been defeated by it, and their bloody corpses lie strewn by the roadside, derided and desecrated by anti-terrorist critics and novelists. Undoubtedly an appalling risk is taken, for the defeat of a Terrorist is a gross and humiliating defeat. He can be justly accused of affectation, of pretentiousness and of exhibitionism, and several modern novelists have shied so desperately away from the pedestrianism of their contemporaries that they have tumbled headlong into all these vices. But the Arch-terrorist stands now like a monolith in the waste of contemporary prose, and we can clearly make out the uncoordinated but by no means disreputable platoon which is scattered in his wake. Such diverse writers as Thomas Wolfe and Virginia Woolf, Henry Miller and Henry Green, may be grouped in this context under the banner of James Joyce.

The intention of this preamble is to prepare American readers of Henry Green for the shock which they are almost bound to feel at their first approach to him. He is the most *self-conscious* of modern English novelists, the most mannered, the least digestible. I believe that he is also—and I shall try to dissolve any paradox which may seem to be involved here—among the most natural of our novelists and conceivably the most important of them.

The linguistic oddities of Henry Green are not by any means his most important contribution to the novel, but to many readers

they have proved the most important stumbling block to Henry Green. What is required from a new reader is, at first, no more than indulgence, and indulgence can perhaps be induced by occasional reperusal of the passages I have quoted above. Rather than write like this he has chosen to take risks with his medium. To put it more fairly, and with more dignity, I would say that Green has never doubted that his vision was a new one and that it needed a new kind of exposition. In his best books I believe that he has perfectly adjusted his medium to his vision, and that the result has been three or four of the most satisfactory English novels of our time. In his less successful books the language is often strained in a way which seems arbitrary. But Green has never written a book with the sole and deplorable purpose of exhibiting linguistic oddities. A sympathetic reading even of his worst novel reveals that his motive in writing it was that he had seen something and that he wished others to see it too. In this case he has failed to make his vision clear, but the reality and the freshness of his vision cannot be doubted.

Bridesly. Birmingham.

Two o'clock. Thousands came back from dinner along streets.

"What we want is go, push," said works manager to son of Mr. Dupret. "What I say to them is—let's get on with it, let's get the stuff out."

Thousands came back to factories they worked in from their dinners.

This is the opening passage of Green's very early novel, *Living*. It is an intelligent and perceptive study of workingclass life, well documented (in private life Mr. Green is a Birmingham manufacturer), startlingly free of any preconceptions. It is at least arguable that in this book Mr. Green (an old Etonian as well as a capitalist) has written about the proletariat with more insight than has any contemporary writer of proletarian origin. There is no compassion in his vision, no indignation and certainly nothing patronizing. As in all this writer's novels, the characters appear at first to be moving in an odd and unfamiliar way; their motives and their conduct seem to be just out of focus, just to one side of center. They are not predictable, in the sense that they do not conform in their actions to the behavior of the fictional characters we know. Nor would it be true to say that this failure of conformity is due simply to the fact that the characters *do* conform, but that their conformity is to "life"

rather than to fiction. Or at least this is only true in a highly complicated sense. At some point in this book a reader may find that the characters and the actions are suddenly in focus; that they have found their center. And in the same moment he will understand that it is not the characters and the actions which have shifted, but the focus and the center. In other words what has happened is that Green has succeeded in imposing his peculiar vision on his reader. We are seeing people from a position which we have never adopted before, and, by doing so, our stereoscopic vision has been startlingly clarified. So long as we are able to preserve Green's vision, superimposed on whatever our own one may have been, however simple or however complex it was, then our total apprehension of life has been immeasurably enriched.

Yet it remains none the less true that the beginning of the book is not inviting. We feel at once that an effect is being striven for, and, by the inevitable action of readers' resistance, we determine that the effect shall not be achieved. The assault has been too sudden. Even the great Terrorist himself began *Ulysses* in a prose which was familiar to his readers, and exercised considerable discretion in escorting them by devious paths to the guillotine. And in this case the eccentricities seem somehow trivial. This omission of the definite article irritates us by its self-consciousness, and seems to contribute nothing to the perfectly ordinary statements which are being made. Nor are we likely to be reassured as we read further. "Mr. Bridges went down through works in Birmingham till Tupe he found." "Again was first day outside, another fine evening." Many such sentences as this confront us on every page of the book, and it would be difficult to excuse them. In the first of them I can think of only one conceivable reason for such an inversion. Had the reader been led to expect that Mr. Bridges was likely to find not Tupe, but someone else, then this bringing forward of, and consequent emphasis on, the proper name might conceivably have been justified. But in the text no such reason exists. One can only feel that the writer was alarmed by the flatness of the sentence he so carefully avoided, and that this inadequate motive was the only one which moved him to make his distortion. As for the second sentence, I find it frankly incomprehensible. If it was first day outside, how could it also be the evening?

Yet the *general* motive for Green's oddities of diction in this

early book do not seem to me to be very difficult to discover. He had felt an aversion to the *looseness* of modern English prose, and to avoid this weakness, he has tried to write in what is virtually a kind of shorthand. His sentences are short and staccato. Many of his inversions do save the use of a word or two. He omits articles, and sometimes the connecting particles. To my mind, and to the later mind of Henry Green, this was a wholly mistaken method of confronting the contemporary linguistic problem. Telegraphese is simply one of the diseases of our time, and homeopathic remedies are patently inapplicable to literature. Certainly it is true that a great fault of current speech lies in the proliferation of superfluous and meaningless sounds. Phrases like "as a matter of fact" and "taking everything into consideration" have lowered the currency of speech, and some severity is needed. But "the" is both an innocent and a useful word, and to concentrate so heavy a gun against it seems a curious misdirection of this writer's fire-power.

Green's two earliest books, *Blindness* and *Living*, revealed a young writer of obvious originality but confronted by obvious dangers. Would he surrender to his idiosyncrasies and dissipate his talents in a mere striving at any price for the outward appearance of novelty? His next two books were not encouraging. *Party Going* is a whimsical description of a group of rich young people leaving from Victoria Station for the continent. One has the gloomy feeling when reading it that what was aimed at was quite unashamedly a *tour-de-force*; and nothing in the world is more discouraging than a *tour-de-force manqué*. The language of this book is not so much distorted as archly *contrived*, and although there are moments of superb and individual humor the whole book leaves a rather sickly taste in the mouth. When *Party Going* was followed by a slapdash and totally immemorable autobiography, any critic would have been justified in suggesting that Henry Green's name might be regretfully added to the long list which is headed *Hopes Dashed or Promise Unfulfilled*. Fortunately this judgment would have proved grotesquely premature.

Almost all the admirers of Green would agree that his three best novels, the *oeuvre* by which he may be allowed to stand or fall, are the three which followed in fairly quick succession on his unfortunate autobiography. To these three, *Caught*, *Loving*, and *Back*, some of his more extreme devotees would add his 1948 novel, *Concluding*.

A great difficulty in writing about Henry Green is that a mere precis of his "plots" serves almost no purpose at all. *Caught*, for example, might be described as the *dégringolade* of a fire officer during the early raids on London. In it there are vivid and terrible descriptions of fire fighting (Green was an active member of the London fire service throughout the war); there is a sub-plot which is concerned with the abduction of a child by the fire officer's crazy sister, and there is a climax in Pye's final *folie de grandeur*. *Loving* is a comedy about the servants in a large Anglo-Irish house, a comedy in which almost nothing happens except the discovery by the servants of adultery among the gentry. *Back* is the description of an English prisoner of war's first months in England after several years' absence. While Charlie has been away, his girl has died, and the theme of the book lies in his refusal to recognize this fact, his insistence that the girl's half sister is herself, still alive but refusing to recognize him. From these descriptions it might be supposed that *Caught* was the most conventional of the three books, since its plot, though unusual, is at least describable in other than the book's own terms. Certainly it would be impossible to describe the devious and apparently trivial episodes which follow each other so inconsequentially in *Loving*, and it might well be imagined that the curious notion which inspired *Back* would suffice at most for a somewhat tenuous short story. But the fact is that any approach to Green in these terms is certain to be abortive. By this I don't imply that the subject matter of his novels are of no importance; they are vitally important, but important principally as the vehicle for something else.

Already on several occasions in this article I have been obliged to use the word "vision" when writing of Green's achievement. In this context it is a word which requires definition as sternly as it defies it. Certainly *Weltanschauung* will not do instead, implying as it does a consciously held and readily expressible body of belief. Henry Green is totally and remarkably without a *Weltanschauung*; it has proved one of the most awkward facts about him to those critics who are forever anxious to explain in their own words the precise message which their victims intended to purvey. I am not suggesting that this is a bad form of criticism. When Mr. Trilling writes almost exclusively in these terms about E. M. Forster he is applying his keen and argumentative mind to an admirably suitable field. In fact the

majority of novelists are not only amenable to this type of criticism, they demand it. It would be possible, for example, to write of Conrad entirely in terms of his "vision" (which I would now hesitantly define as a writer's sensual, emotional and instinctive apprehension of the world, as opposed to the intellectual superstructure which he constructs on top of it). But such a criticism of Conrad, though apt and instructive would also be grossly inadequate, since Conrad was a novelist of strong and consciously held moral views. When Mr. Trilling epitomizes the work of Forster in a single phrase, "The underdeveloped heart," his epigram is wholly justified. No reader would be so foolish as to suppose that this epitome will absolve him from reading Forster's novels, that it is an adequate summary of what Forster has to say. Because he is a good novelist what he has to say can only be said as he said it. Yet the epitome is justified because the novels of Forster are the vehicles, the *necessary* vehicles for expounding, deepening and realizing our inadequate apprehension of Trilling's single phrase. My point is that no such phrase exists by which the burden of Henry Green's song can be epitomized.

Earlier in this article I wrote that there is no compassion in Green's vision. Perhaps it is by this fact that his achievement can be both understood and "placed." It is both his strength and his ultimate limitation.

Henry Green's almost unique gift is for hallucination. By this I mean neither fantasy nor obsession, but a bewildering ability to see far and wide over the landscape, and to see everything through strange-colored glass. Or one might say that in Green's case one has the impression that he has stepped confidently through a looking-glass and is staring back at us from there with a certain calm and appraising satisfaction. Or again, to pursue this purely visual analogy, this writer might be pictured spread out in the middle of a ceiling and seeing the people below him in what they would hold to be distorted and unnatural shapes. In fact I do not use the word hallucination in opposition to something else which is to be called reality, but in opposition to normal vision. What is really amazing about this writer is that he can comfortably remain in the extraordinary positions he chooses for the whole duration of a book. Many writers attempt this, but in most of them one is aware either of the mounting strain which they are feeling, splayed up there on the ceiling, or of their plain

inability to sustain their vision for more than a quaint passage here and there. Yet the *whole* of *Caught* is made lurid by the freakish character of the fire officer; *Loving* is a kind of particolored mosaic in which the quirks, the ignorances, the perversities of the servants are not simply described but actually describe themselves, are both the matter and the manner of the whole book. In *Back* Charlie's obstinate error of mistaken identity so colors his vision that the whole panorama of postwar England is seen from a strange and hallucinatory angle.

In fact the analogies which I used to exhibit Henry Green as a spectator are useful but incomplete. For he is also a participant. Poised aloft he not only surveys the scalps of his victims, but is able to become himself a scalp. This is due to his astonishing gift of dispassionate sympathy, in the most literal sense of the word. When Charlie, the returned soldier, observes the world through the colored spectacles of his obsession, his creator is also behind those spectacles, sharing and encouraging that peculiar but illuminating vision. Green's ultimate limitation (every novelist has one) is that his activity, both as spectator and as participant, is fundamentally lacking in human passion. His books are exquisite, subtle and entrancing, but they remain a brilliant exercise. At times he *simulates* tenderness with an astonishing and deceptive skill, but the final effect is almost frigid. We have been fascinated and convinced by Pye, by Charlie, by Raunce the butler; these figures have revealed to us a new dimension of human experience, but they have not moved us as we are moved, for example, by the far more conventional creatures of Forster. Indeed it might be helpful to regard Henry Green as the perfect complement to Forster. He is a subtler, a more sophisticated, a more magical writer, but, owing to his lack of either passion or compassion, he does not enter into the substance of our lives as Forster does. He has instructed us in new uses of the pure imagination, clarified and enriched our sensual understanding of the world, but he has neither tried to achieve nor accidentally achieved a moral effect.

This becomes clearer in his last novel than in any of the three I have been considering. In some ways *Concluding* is the most *réussi* of all his books. Approximately, it is concerned with an English girls' school in the country, and the events would appear to be taking place some time in the nineteen-seventies or eighties. An old retired profes-

sor lives on the grounds of the school, and the main theme of the book is his growing fear of eviction at the hands of the hostile headmistresses. Two of the girls disappear; there is a love affair between the old man's daughter and one of the masters; the book ends with a dance for the pupils. The book's title is misleading, for it is the most deliberately inconclusive novel which can ever have been written. Nothing is settled. We do not learn what has happened to the vanished girls, or what will happen either to the professor or to his daughter. On the first page we enter a sort of timeless dream, and on the last page the dream breaks off. It breaks off but it does not *end*. The world of *Concluding* is a world of pure hallucination, timeless, unhampered by the accepted sequence of cause and effect, yet strangely unified, strangely possessed of its own private logic. It is an exceedingly uncomfortable world to inhabit, a beautiful but pitiless nightmare in which the only warmth comes from the treacherous adolescent bodies of the girls.

Quite soon, girls began to cut in. While Inglefield kept the instrument hard at it, the original partners began to break up, to step back over the wax mirror floor out of one another's arms, moving sideways by such as would not be parted yet, each to tap a second favorite on a bare, quiet shoulder. Then the girl so chosen would give a little start, open those great shut eyes, much greater than jewels as she circled, and, circling yet, would dip into these fresh limbs which moved already in the dance, disengaging thus to leave her first choice to slip sideways in turn past established, whirling partners until she found another who was loved and yet alone.

This passage is typical of the last stage of Green's curious manner, typical in its deliberate clumsiness, its complexity and its curious effectiveness. It is also typical of Green's emotional stance. He is erotically enchanted by the dancing girls, and we are enabled to share his enchantment. But the final reaction to that dance is a shiver down the spine, as if the girls had really been ghosts and were to fall into dust at the last note of the gramophone. And this, indeed, may well be a reader's final reaction to the whole book, a sense that he has been enchanted by an uneasy suspicion that the magic was black. There is not only no compassion in this book; there is, for the first time, a subtle assault on compassion. Not that the book is cruel in any obvious way, but that by the curious purity of its negation it inspires a sort of chilly despair.

Whatever Henry Green does next—and he has already proved the unwisdom of making prophecies about his future—he has already written three of the most original and stimulating English novels of our time. His curious manner has been a wonderfully apt vehicle for his curious vision. Since they are inseparable it may be well to finish this article with a quotation.

A country bus drew up below the church and a young man got out. This he had to do carefully, because he had a peg leg.

The roadway was asphalted blue.

It was a summer day in England. Rain clouds were amassed back of a church tower which stood on rising ground. As he looked up he noted well those slits, built for defense, in the blood-colored brick. Then he ran his eye with caution over cypresses and between grave stones. He might have been watching for a trap, who had lost his leg in France for not noticing the gun beneath a rose.

For, climbing around and up these trees of mourning, was rose after rose after rose, while, here and there, the spray overburdened by the mass of flower, a live wreath lay fallen on a wreath of stone, or on a box in marble colder than this day, or onto frosted paper blooms which, under glass, marked each bed of earth wherein the dear departed encouraged life above in the green grass, the cypresses and in those roses gay and bright which, as still as this dark afternoon, started at whosoever looked, or hung their heads to droop, to grow stained, to die when their turn came.

This, the opening passage of *Back*, is the later Green at his most exuberant. Nobody could deny that it is mannered writing, at least in the sense that it is not what one has become accustomed to. But it is the only kind of writing which is natural to the natural vision of this unusual man. For my own part I find this passage both beautiful and effective. I am persuaded by it. I am seduced into the mood which the writer urges on me, and at the end of the book I feel that I have been well rewarded for my willing seduction.

MODERN EVIDENCE

Hugo von Hofmannsthal

THE CONVERSATION OF THE DANCERS

The Dancing Girls: Laidion, the taller; Hymnis, the smaller. The second mate from a merchant ship.

Hymnis: May I come in?

Laidion: Yes, do.

Hymnis: Is it Pamphilos who is with you?

Laidion: Yes, but come in all the same.

Hymnis (entering): But that's not Pamphilos.

Laidion: Never mind. He's a sailor. Go on telling about the people on the island.

The Man: Well, what am I to tell?

(He gets up)

Laidion: About the king, how they carry him and how everyone dances round him and touches him.

The Man: Why do you want me to tell about such things? I must go now.

Laidion: You must tell. I want you to stay and tell.

The Man: What shall I tell in front of that girl there? I don't know anything.

Laidion: What you told me about the island and the people on the island, more of it.

The Man: You know that by now. I'm off. Your sister will stay with you.

Laidion: That's not my sister.

The Man: I'll leave you with your friend. I must get back to my ship.

Laidion: Stay here and tell me more. Then I'll send for something

to eat, then you sleep and rest and spend the night with me and tomorrow morning you go to your ship.

The Man: No, I must get back to my ship now.

Laidion: I thank you for your courtesy. Does everyone on your ship have such good manners?

The Man: Goodbye.

Laidion: Go wherever you like.

(He goes off.)

Hymnis: What did he give you?

Laidion: . . .

Hymnis: That belt hanging there, is that from him?

Laidion: . . .

Hymnis: Is this string of dark green stones from him, too? But they are not real.

Laidion: Of course they're real. Why shouldn't they be real?

Hymnis: Real ones have to be transparent.

Laidion: Those there have little veins of gold.

Hymnis: Who knows if it's real gold?

Laidion: . . .

Hymnis: Are you asleep? If you want to sleep, I'll leave again. Do you know what he put there? Four drachma. For a sailor that isn't bad, what with the presents as well. I always like men off ships much better than soldiers. Now I see you want to sleep. So I'm off. . . . Well, I'd like you to know, this evening I saw Demonassa dance, together with her sister, Bacchis. They're supposed not to be sisters at all, by the way. Ha! There's nothing so unheard of about their dancing. But what a fuss the men make over them! Demonassa has pretty shoulders and a good back and moves well from the hips, that's all. And Bacchis, she has nicely jointed arms and legs, and pointed fingers. Hussies both of them, but the one shows it and the other hides it: that is what puts them over. We two could do everything they do, if you only wanted to. There's not a thing about it which hasn't been seen before. But all their pantomimes are invented by poets, each by a different one, and they have verses recited at the same time, and in this way they throw dust in the peoples' eyes, as if one hadn't seen all that before and done it oneself. Bacchis is best when she has a lot to do with her hands: when a nymph is transformed into a young tree, or Ampelis into

a vine: that's what she's really good at. I wouldn't mind having her wrists. And animals she's good at, too: the young deer which fears the wind and plays with the wind, or the bird in the net. Demonassa is good when she can do a lot with her head and neck: she dances something while Bacchis stands stiff and rigid in the middle, holding the Medusa mask in front of her face and Demonassa comes dancing along, unsuspecting, and suddenly she has to turn into stone; then she makes a movement of throwing back her head, and a convulsive stiffening, first of all down to her hips, then down to her feet, till you feel the ice-cold shiver run down your back.

Laidion: My God, how flat and futile all that is! There we dance for twelve or twenty men, among them a few rich old dodderers and the rest parasites. We dance and then we are tired and then everything turns ugly: everything crowds in on me, the faces of the men, the lights, the noise; like the beaks of greedy birds everything pecks me in the face. I would rather die than lie with them and drink and listen to their shrieks. Then I wish myself as far away as a bird can fly. I have always known that somewhere there is an island like the one he told me about.

Hymnis: What kind of island is that?

Laidion: Oh, I don't know. Leave me alone.

Hymnis: Sailors are great liars, you know.

Laidion: I know perfectly well these were no lies he told me. I would like to keep him here twenty nights, and I wouldn't allow him to stop telling me.

Hymnis: What do you care about these strange places? Surely you wouldn't like to be there! What would you do among those colored barbarians?

Laidion: Fool! What do you get out of dancing? Are you ever happy for one moment?

Hymnis: Oh, shut up! You've got your melancholia again! I have fun when I dance, when they tear their wreaths from their heads and throw them to me. Then I hold them, then I am really myself.

Laidion: But inside yourself? Are you happy inside? Can you forget yourself, can you get rid of all fear, get rid of the shadow that darkens the blood in your veins?

Hymnis: What fear? I have no fear when I dance.

Laidion: But you have wishes, and wishes are fear. All your danc-

ing is nothing but wishing and striving. You spring to and fro: are you fleeing from yourself? When you are hiding, are you hiding yourself from the eternal restless yearning within you? You are aping the gestures of animals in trees: do you ever become one with them? You step out of your garment: do you step out of your fear? Can you ever, even for two hours, lose all fear? They can. They have no fear of dancing like that in the open under the sacred trees.

Hymnis: Who on earth are these people you're talking about? Do they skip on one foot and cover themselves with the lobes of their ears? Are they spotted like leopards or striped like the animal called zebra?

Laidion: They are of a golden color, and their mouths are strong like the mouths of wild animals. Their hips are strong and slender.

Hymnis: Would you like to be like that? Pah! I'm sure their skin stinks enough to make one sick.

Laidion: The trees there are much bigger than our trees; their blue-black shadow is like something alive; you can touch it like the body of a fruit. Their gods are in the trees and between the trees, he says, and even so they are not ashamed to do it.

Hymnis: They dance?

Laidion: Once they dance like this, once a year. The young men crouch on the ground, the girls of the island stand in front of them all together, so motionless that their bodies are like one body. Then they dance and in the end they give themselves to the youths, without choosing—whoever seizes one, his she is. For the sake of the gods they do it and the gods bless it.

Hymnis: Such shamelessness!

Laidion: The happy ones! They are without fear.

Hymnis: What do you mean by that, Laidion?

Laidion: Oh, can't you understand me? You see, I grew up in the house of my mother, and was a naughty child, and always wanted something and didn't have it. So it went on from morning to night. Then I turned fourteen and began to yearn—and then they brought me to the rich Kallias; there I lay and walked around and stared in amazement and shuddered and bit myself in the wrists with impatience; and then I gave myself to the one I was in love with and he was filled with hatred and bitterness because I had first been the other one's, and so that passed, and then came another one and still an-

other. . . . I believe there wasn't a moment when I didn't long to get away from myself.

Hymnis: You always had it too easy. Have you ever been beaten up? Have you in your whole life, I wonder, known real hunger?

Laidion: I can imagine a girl who is beaten up and is blissfully happy. And you can lie in shadow and be hungry and feel happier than an Indian prince. But to lie there in the world like Argus and be covered with eyes, an eye always open: to be in the arms of a man who loves you, whom you think you love, and at the same time with your whole soul to listen for the indifferent murmuring of water nearby, to have to listen because something forces you, something holds you like a vise, is it yearning, is it fear . . . as if with this murmuring your whole life were running out of your veins. Or they have invited you to a country house, and you are riding along on a mule and should be gay and not think of anything but that you are young and that more than one would be glad to stand all night long by your door, but there, all of a sudden, under your eyes, stand the trees on the highway like menacing messengers, the mountains in the distance like a judge, as if your lost life were at stake and you sit in guilt and pain tied down to the animal, like one led to a place of execution, and your hundred eyes miss nothing, neither the beetle which crawls past in the dust, leaving you to your fate, nor the bird in the air, singing high above you, leaving you to your fate.

Hymnis: What are you talking about, Laidion? You have never been dragged on a mule to a place of execution.

Laidion: It doesn't need a mule, nor a tribunal. My foot touches a dry branch, Hymnis, and its miserable existence enters into me, like the beauty of violets and roses it enters into me through the eyes and makes me its slave, and at night I must lie with open eyes and think of this accursed piece of wood and be at its mercy, and must imitate its twisted body with crooked rigid limbs, so that a nightbird watching me would take me for a Thessalian witch or one possessed—does one not then have cause for fear? Has one not cause for fear when in the morning the sun is so small, when sometimes in the morning it hangs like something childish strung up by children in the branches of the figtree, and then climbs up? But what, after all, is not fearful? And what could it be that makes us dance if not fear? It holds the strings up there, fastened to the centers of our bodies, and pulls

us to and fro and makes our limbs fly. And when I, as Bacchante, fling my feet, and my arms and hair fly towards the stars, do you think it is pleasure? Don't you see that it is fear that makes me leap?

Hymnis: Are you so much shaken by fear?

Laidion: It does not always show its skinny leopard's arms. Sometimes it holds a mask before its face and disguises its voice: then it is called Hope. Sometimes I believe that to hope is more dreadful than to fear. Utterly emptied out you lie there after a night of hope. There's nothing like it to suck the soul out of your body. A happy man knows no hope. They are unspeakably happy when they dance before their men and before their gods, and know nothing more about one another and all are together and each one alone.

Hymnis: Are you talking about the barbarian women on the island again?

Laidion: Yes, I'm talking of those on the island. They are unspeakably happy during this hour, more than all their life long. Before that, they sat on clean mats for seven days and seven nights filled with fear and anguish. Can you imagine how one sits on a clean mat?

Hymnis: It doesn't take much to imagine that! Do you think I don't know how to keep myself clean?

Laidion: I tell you, if I would pour all the water from my well, all the water of the world over this mat here, and if I would rinse the floor around it, that would still not make it clean. Is the air, by any chance, clean? Does clean air blow anywhere beneath the stars? Isn't there everywhere yearning and fear, desire and depravity? Doesn't everything, everything lie between a death and a lust, troubled and soiled? I tell you, if something really clean, really pure would come along, the sea would foam up and form a lane and our hearts would leap out of us and roll along and come to rest for ever on this purity. Just to think of a clean mat makes me tremble. Perhaps they are really lying on clean mats. Then they would be animals or gods or both at once, and we ought to worship them. I don't believe I have ever seen anything pure. I have never seen anything on which I would like to lay my heart.

Hymnis: So you have never been in love, Laidion?

Laidion: If I were drunk and made my bed in the gutter, I wouldn't want to have it talked about afterwards when I've sobered up.

(They are silent)

Laidion: I can feel how they feel when I close my eyes in such a way that the upper lid just trembles over the lower. Like you there the men sit, very small, very far away. And in the trees hang the gods, fearful, with wide-open eyes, but into those who have risen from the clean mats nothing can instil fear. They are charmed. Everything—fear, desire, all choice, all unquenchable restlessness—everything has been transformed at the limits of their bodies. They are virgins and have forgotten it; they are supposed to become women and mothers and have forgotten it: to them everything is ineffable. And then they dance.

She begins to sway from the hips. Somehow one feels that she is not alone, that many of her kind are around her and that all are dancing at once under the eyes of the gods. They dance and circle as dusk falls: shadows loosen themselves from the trees and sink down into the crowd of dancers, and out of the tree-tops rise great birds housing the departed spirits, and join the circle, and beneath them all the island vibrates like a boat filled with drunken people. And nothing on the island defies the power of the dancers; at this moment they are as strong as the gods; the arms and hips and shoulders of the gods are intermingled with their movement; from nowhere can the blue net of death or the coral-red sword of the gods fall upon them. They are givers of birth and the newly-born of the island, they are the bearers of death and life.

At this moment *Laidion* hardly resembles herself any longer. Under her tense features appears something terrifying, threatening, eternal: the face of a barbarian deity. Her arms rise up and down in a frightening rhythm, death threatening like clubs. And her eyes seem filled with a hardly bearable tension of bliss. And there she lies already on the bed, breathing hard and short, surrounded by the small empty room, reality and *Hymnis*, who covers her with a small red rug.

Laidion: (*opens her eyes after a while, and sits up. She is very pale*): *Hymnis*! *Hymnis*! Here I lie and know it—and I have nothing! I want to scream and bite into my pillows, bite into my arm, and see my blood flow, that such a thing exists in the world and I have none of it! Like a glowing coal it will burn in me, that that man had to come and tell me that somewhere there is such an island where they dance and are happy without the thorn of hope! For that's it, *Hymnis*, that's everything, *Hymnis*, to be happy without hope.

(*Translated from the German by James Stern*)

(*This translation of "The Conversation of the Dancers" is published in PARTISAN REVIEW by arrangement with the editors of Bollingen Series, who will bring out soon a two-volume edition of selected works by Hugo von Hofmannsthal.*)

Irving Howe

THE CULTURE CONFERENCE

Nothing at the "Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace" happened quite as one expected; consequently it had an importance beyond its attendant flare of headlines and picketlines. From it one could learn something about the current condition of Stalinism, the possible appearance of a new political tendency in the U.S., and perhaps even the behavior of certain American intellectuals. Since *PARTISAN REVIEW* readers have by now no doubt seen detailed reports of the conference proceedings, I shall largely confine myself to general observations and conclusions.

Outside the Waldorf, the Catholic War Veterans were picketing aggressively; inside, some three thousand middleclass Wallaceites, braced by the usual strategically placed party fraction, sat passively listening to speeches. It was interesting and important to observe that the percentage of young people seemed smaller than at previous conferences of this sort; apparently the Stalinists are not doing well on the campus. It was also interesting that in addition to the breathless middlebrows, half grasping and half fearful in their culture-hunger (*did you SEE Shostakovich?*), there were untainted innocents who really thought the conference had some genuine relation to working for peace. Somehow the Stalinists always find new innocents, each batch on a lower cultural level.

At the very first session there were significant divergences from previous Stalinists-front conferences. None of the speakers was either a prominent or a serious intellectual; no official representative from the Communist Party of the U.S. appeared; each speaker deplored, if only in passing, the absence of democracy in Russia. None of these things would have been possible ten years ago.

Few commentators on the conference have said anything about the first speaker, a retired Bishop from Utah who nearly broke up the whole affair by talking forever, but to me his speech and its enthusiastic reception were particularly revealing. Apparently not having enjoyed so receptive a congregation for some time, the Bishop indulged in every conceivable pulpit witticism and rhetorical flourish. To watch the Stalinists

on the stage grin knowingly (the Poles were particularly amused) and then applaud vigorously his peroration in behalf of God's path as the only way to peace, was to see in miniature the maddening absurdities of our political-cultural situation. What preposterous reasoning could have led a retired clergyman from Utah to share, with beaming self-delight, a platform with a commissar from Russia? And the worst of it was that the poor man (*he looks so much like the Dean*) seemed totally oblivious to the indecency of the farce in which he played the pious jester.

The other speakers, Harlow Shapley, O. John Rogge, and T. O. Thackrey, then editor of *The New York Post*, began with slurred criticisms of Russian "restrictions on liberty" and then launched detailed denunciations of U.S. foreign policy. This political line, while extremely useful to Stalinism, is not to be identified with it. It is something rather new, and on the following day received its most sophisticated intellectual development by Frederick Schuman.

If, as seems probable, there will not be a war in the next two or three years, and if, as also seems probable, the Marshall plan does not solve the fundamental problem of European economy, the Schuman-Rogge position may become a serious factor in American political life. The cold war rankles—why not reach a cold agreement? Why not divide the world on a bluntly imperial basis, allowing the Russians free reign in "their" sphere of influence in order to be rid of the annoyances of the western Communist Parties? The idea of formalizing the world's split—in the name, of course, of one world—will be attractive to those who fear war and feel no sense of rebellion against either Stalinism or capitalism. Hence the Schuman-Rogge position, half a cynical imperialist proposal for the U.S. and half a proposal for the appeasement of Russia, could be advanced alternately or simultaneously in the name of peace and *Realpolitik*. To gain large popular support, such a position would have to be presented by politicians untainted with Stalinist associations; various new leaders or semi-isolationists might find useful the position Schuman and Rogge have prepared for them. The Russians might then find powerful new allies in the U.S.—allies, not apologists. For Fadeyev's polemic against Schuman notwithstanding, they are likely to feel that powerful allies are more useful than powerless apologists. The possibility of such a new political formation a few years hence may have been one reason why the Stalinists tolerated the anti-Russian remarks of the conference speakers to an extent that would have been impossible during the 'thirties.

Then again, the Stalinists had no alternative. Few prominent Ameri-

can intellectuals are now willing to work with them, some because of intellectual conviction and others because it is no longer safe or fashionable; the only literary highbrow of wide reputation who spoke at the conference was F. O. Matthiessen. Having lost most of its support in both intellectual circles and the labor movement, the C.P. retains strength only in the urban middle classes, particularly the professions and the mass culture and amusement industries. There can be for it no adequate compensation for losses in the unions, but in some ways the C.P. finds Hollywood and Broadway a profitable substitute for the intelligentsia. The Broadway people are less troublesome, ask fewer questions than the intellectuals; they are less prone to fool with notions about independent thought; and they have much more money to contribute. Yet this shift from quality has certain disadvantages: the Stalinists could find no "big name" intellectual—no Dos Passos or Richard Wright or Edmund Wilson—to lead off at the conference. That they were forced to use such intellectual fly-weights as Rogge and Thackrey is a telling indication of how serious has been their recent decline.

The two ideologies at the conference, the outright Stalinist one and the other which, for lack of a better label, I have called the Schuman-Rogge position, were not in conflict but neither were they in complete harmony. Fadeyev, head of the Russian delegation and the warden who runs the Russian "Writers Union," severely and with obvious pleasure chastized Schuman for his unfavorable remarks about Russia. (Behind Fadeyev's behavior there was probably a certain non-political factor: how the commissar loves to lord it over the deviating "civilized" foreigners. . . .) Officially, however, the two ideologies melted into one emotional whine: a call for "cultural understanding" and "peace." The phrase "cultural understanding" is one of the more vicious bits of obscurantist political verbiage. We are supposed to believe that the international crisis arose from a misunderstanding . . . the reception on the phone was bad, perhaps, and the Americans and Russians did not hear each other rightly . . . if only the Americans read a few more Russian novels and the Russians realized that there *are* good Americans who want to share sincerely . . . to share in what? . . . well, in cultural understanding. Similarly, the word "peace" was repeated endlessly, as if in some desperate incantation. Yet what did the word refer to at this conference, other than the Stalinists' program for Russian conquest and the all too legitimate fears and yearnings of the innocents?

The audience, one felt, was uneasy. Picket lines outside, oppositionist intellectuals both in the hotel and the conference, attacks on Russia by *our* speakers— was this the emotional solace and bolstering

for which the fellow-travelers come to such conferences? To get together in one room, to hear authoritative voices ringing with confirmation of one's hopes, to see and perhaps for a moment talk to the leaders after their oratorical performances, to be reassured by the august trustees of the faith from overseas—this was the attraction of the conference. Now it may be objected that all political movements must engage in such ritual procedures, which is true; but the distinctive feature of Stalinism, as of all totalitarian movements, is that these procedures become the essence of the convocation of followers. For this ritual to be satisfying to the participants, the managers of such a conference must make certain that it moves with a minimum of disturbance and dissent, a maximum of pleasant and smooth unanimity. The fellow-traveler's half totalitarian mind wants to be soothed, to be immersed in a warm bath of rhetorical reassurance. And this the conference managers could not quite provide—the bath was there, but the temperature was erratic. Which is why the audience applauded the Russians so hysterically: they at least were reliable, undeviating, the real thing.

For the party fraction working behind the scenes, organizational control of the conference was a quite easy matter. The larger the conference, the less trouble a small minority has in controlling it. By its very nature, such a conference attracts people who have neither the intention nor the ability to raise serious problems or to participate actively; they come for passive delights. Bound together by the Russian myth, the participants are infinitely pliable; were they not, they would not have come at all. (How can 3,000 people hold a conference, anyway?) For the Stalinist managers the problem was not the mass of participants, but the unpredictable speakers. So long as they can bank on the Russian myth and so long as they have cadres of hardworking anonymous members, the Stalinists will always be able to control the mechanical side of such conferences.

Besides, they have developed in the past twenty years a series of highly skilled manipulative devices. The conference chairman, Harlow Shapley, appointed a resolutions committee—and which delegate would have thought to disturb the atmosphere of unity by suggesting that the committee be elected? Shapley ran the conference as if he were an old party factionalist; how curious the way in which the fellow-traveler delights in the vicarious sensations of regularity and discipline. At Princeton I have argued with scientists who furiously insist that Shapley is an independent intellectual and not a fellow-traveler, but if his behavior at the Waldorf was not fellow-traveling, it was, for the Stalinists, a most convenient kind of intellectual independence. . . .

At the heart of such conferences, and in fact of the whole Stalinist movement, lies the Russian myth. How deeply the hope of socialism must have sunk into the Western mind can be seen by the fanatical insistence with which millions of people in Europe and America (not, after all, the worst people in the world) cling to the fantasy that in Russia socialism is, in one or another way, being built. To admit that the slave society of Russia is a cruel distortion of the original socialist hope is to face a terrifying world in which all the trodden paths of history seem only to lead to destruction. One often wonders why the European worker and the American middle class fellow-traveler cling to the Russian myth. There is certainly no one answer to that question, but perhaps one of the answers is itself a question: what must they face if they abandon the myth?

In the meantime, the conference's sense of unanimity was severely disturbed by the presence of an opposition of several hundred anti-Stalinist intellectuals, headed by George Counts and Sidney Hook. Hurriedly organized but supported by intellectuals of various anti-Stalinist persuasions (including liberal supporters of capitalism, pacifists and various kinds of socialists), the Americans for Intellectual Freedom was a committee which largely confined itself to several specific immediate issues: a disclosure of the true sponsorship of the Waldorf conference, a challenge of the Russians' claim to be free intellectual agents, and an exposure of the conference sponsors' failure to include any known anti-Stalinists among its speakers. The AIF issued informative press releases on these points, held a public meeting, and gained the support of writers from abroad, among them T. S. Eliot, Ignazio Silone, Arthur Koestler and Bertrand Russell.

Its effectiveness in combatting the Stalinists was at least partly due, I think, to not having tried to work up any kind of general political program. As soon as questions of program are raised—the sociological meaning of Stalinism, how to oppose it politically, with whom alliances against Stalinism are permissible and profitable—there must undoubtedly appear sharp disagreements. (As it was, there were a few remarks in one AIF statement in support of U.S. foreign policy which some anti-Stalinists, including myself, could not accept, as, I imagine, might not even some of those who signed the AIF releases or were active in its work. Nonetheless, on the specific issues raised by the conference, it was possible for those who support and do not support U.S. foreign policy to work together.) At the AIF meeting there was expressed a considerable range of political opinion, including that of the pacifist A. J. Muste. (No pacifists were invited to the Waldorf “peace conference.”) I cite

these differences of opinion, not of course to deplore them, but to indicate that such a rallying of intellectuals, being without programmatic agreement, is most effective when confined to matters of specific action. At the Waldorf it was possible for anti-Stalinists of various liberal and radical hues to work together on the basis of one common denominator: a defense of democratic rights and intellectual freedom. This basis has been used in the past for civil liberties cases, and can be used for demarcated action against the Stalinists, as well as other opponents of democratic liberties. Apparently, some sort of similar cooperation among anti-Stalinist intellectuals is to be organized in France to oppose the much more dangerous "peace conference" soon to be held there.

At the panels into which the conference divided, it was possible to study the behavior of both Stalinists and fellow-travelers when confronted by radical or democratic opposition. Several anti-Stalinist intellectuals, some affiliated with the AIF and some not—Peter Blake, George Counts, Robert Lowell, Dwight Macdonald, Mary McCarthy, Jean Malaquais, and Nicholas Nabokov—spoke for two minutes each. Not all were effective; it takes considerable skill to be able to express a political opinion in two minutes, and most intellectuals, accustomed to more indulgent audiences, lack that skill. Counts began to document his charge that there was no intellectual freedom in Russia, but could not finish. Macdonald asked Fadeyev several sharp questions about the fate of Russian writers. McCarthy asked F. O. Matthiessen if he approved of Fadeyev's answers. Malaquais told how the French Stalinists had abused André Gide after his book on Russia appeared.

Fadeyev spoke with the shrill ferocity and brutality of a bureaucrat who, at the moment, lacks prisons and labor camps and must therefore confine himself to less persuasive means of action. There is no reason to believe that he is any sort of intellectual, even of the unhappy variety of which the rest of the Russian delegation was composed; he is simply a privileged bureaucrat; and it is remarkable that he looked, behaved and spoke so very much like the bureaucrat of one's imagination. Fadeyev seemed to enjoy himself more than anyone else at the conference; he did not have to worry about maintaining good relations with Schuman or Rogge and just let loose berating those stupid Americans.

At the beginning of the writers panel, F. O. Matthiessen had made an incredibly simplistic speech about "the American tradition," quite worse than anything concocted by Granville Hicks. (He had praised Melville for making the hero of *Moby Dick* a "common man.") When forced to comment on Fadeyev's remarks, he did not take the easy out of pleading ignorance of Russian literary conditions. As if driven by

some compulsion to extreme commitment or "martyrdom," he plunged into a defense of Fadeyev, saying that he found the Russian's remarks to be "direct and forthright." That was all: no qualifications about censorship and state pressure, not even of the sort present in his book.

And then Shostakovich. I confess myself somewhat at a loss to formulate a definite attitude towards the Russian composer. At the writers panel he confined himself to a brief ritualistic statement: Russian criticism had helped his music go forward. (He did not say to what.) The next morning he delivered a long speech attacking "formalism" in music and repeating the stock Stalinist phrases about culture. One wondered then: was he, as he sometimes seemed, a pathetic little man, obviously ill at ease and wishing to be away from these painful discussions? or did we think him pathetic because we expected him to be so? There was no way of knowing whether he wrote his speech himself or delivered it under pressure. Was he a victim, as we liked to think, or had he too become calloused by the alternate privileges and rebukes of the Stalin regime? No one could answer these questions, for in the Waldorf too the Iron Curtain hung.

Finally, Norman Mailer, in response to cries from the floor, spoke. Mailer's hesitant, painful, but obviously deeply felt talk was a perfect illustration of a politically inexperienced mind freeing itself from Stalinist influence. A supporter of Wallace in the last election, Mailer now said that he thought both the U.S. and Russia were drifting to state capitalism, that he saw little hope for peace, and that he regretted his pessimism but could not honestly avoid it. The audience listened quietly, with emotions one can imagine.

The conference, on the whole, was a failure. It aroused articulate and aggressive oppositions; it was disturbed by deviant speeches from among its own spokesmen; it could hardly have offered its supporters much reassurance. My final impression is that the Stalinists must soon decide to enter a new political phase in which they will largely abandon their independence and, following a Browder policy, work only through front groups—or face disintegration and destruction. I must also record my perplexity with regard to the behavior of certain American intellectuals. I think I understand Fadeyev and Howard Fast. But Shapley and Matthiessen: what shall one make of them? How can a man like Matthiessen, cultivated and intelligent, lend his support to a creature of a slave state like Fadeyev? What are the drives to self-destruction that can lead a serious intellectual to support a movement whose victory could mean only the end of free intellectual life?

THE QUESTION OF THE POUND AWARD

(EDITORIAL NOTE.—*We are printing below a comment on William Barrett's editorial, "A Prize for Ezra Pound," which appeared in the April issue. A number of Bollingen jurors were invited to discuss the issues connected with the award, but at the time of going to press we had received replies only from Messrs. Auden, Shapiro, and Tate. We would like to hear further from our readers on this subject.*)

W. H. AUDEN:

I fully share Mr. Barrett's concern over the excessive pre-occupation of contemporary criticism with Form and its neglect of Content. I am not sure however that this is the precise problem which his comment raises. In stating my own views, I should like to emphasize that I am speaking purely for myself and am not to be construed as representing any other colleague with whom at any time I may have been associated.

1) According to one theory, art, both in intention and effect, is a means by which emotions are aroused in the spectator or reader, either in order that, by re-living them imaginatively, he may get rid of them, or because he needs to be roused to feel in a certain way. If this theory is adopted, then it seems to me that Plato and Tolstoy are irrefutable. No works of art may be permitted which do not purge men of their bad feelings and stimulate good ones. The criterion of value may vary—Plato thought the supreme value was love of justice and loyalty to the Good State, Tolstoy thought it was love of one's neighbor—but the principle is the same. Applied to the present issue, the conclusion would be obvious—no prize; suppression.

2) One may, on the other hand, hold another theory of art, that, in intention, at least, it is a mirror in which the spectator sees reflected himself and the world, and becomes conscious of his feelings good and bad, and of what their relations to each other are in fact. This theory presupposes, I believe, certain other beliefs into which there is no time to go now, beyond baldly stating them:

- a) All created existence is a good.
- b) Evil is a negative perversion of created good.
- c) Man has free will to choose between good and evil.
- d) But all men are sinners with a perverted will.

An art which did not accurately reflect evil would not be good art.

3) This does not dispose, however, of the question of censorship. Whatever its intention, a work of art cannot compel the reader to look at it with detachment, and prevent him from using it as a stimulus to and excuse for feelings which he should condemn. Everyone, I am sure, has had the experience of reading a book which he was aware, at the time or later, was bad for him personally, whatever its artistic merit, or however harmless it might be for others, because, in this case, he was not capable of exercising free will, and was therefore not reading it as a work of art. For instance, Baudelaire's poem *La Charogne* would not be healthy reading for a necrophilist. Antisemitism is, unfortunately, not only a feeling which all gentiles at times feel, but also, and this is what matters, a feeling of which the majority of them are not ashamed. Until they are, they must be regarded as children who have not yet reached the age of consent in this matter and from whom, therefore, all books, whether works of art or not, which reflect feeling about Jews—and it doesn't make the slightest difference whether they are pro or anti, the *New York Post* can be as dangerous as *Der Stürmer*—must be withheld.

If it were to seem likely that the *Pisan Cantos* would be read by people of this kind, I would be in favor of censoring it (as in the case of the movie, *Oliver Twist*). That would not however prevent me awarding the *Pisan Cantos* a prize before withholding it from the public. But I do not believe that the likelihood exists in this case.

ROBERT GORHAM DAVIS:

The Pound award, it seems to me, is not most profitably taken as a problem in aesthetics. When form and content or free will and determinism or nominalism and realism are allowed to fall into this kind of abstract polarity, they can be argued about fruitlessly until doomsday. What confronts us in the Pound case is a complex of ideas dominant in American criticism during the forties, and made so largely by the talents and critical activities of some of the judges, of Eliot, Auden, Tate and Warren. The judges were judging themselves along with Pound, their master. But nearly everyone in America who is serious about literature is involved in one way or another.

The complex of ideas I speak of has been promoted with tactical skill, group movements, concerted attacks and extremes of mutual laudation. Snobbery and prestige have counted heavily. But it is not a conspiracy. There are truths in it, and much immediate support from the particular history of our time. It asserts that living language, literary sensibility and poetic values are supported by the traditional, the Catholic, the regional, the mythic, the aristocratic, and by a sense of the tragic, of transcendental absolutes, of sin and grace. Language and sensibility and values are destroyed by rationalism, liberalism, positivism, progressivism, equalitarianism, Shelleyanism, sociology, and the ideology of the Enlightenment. This has been made explicit by Eliot in *After Strange Gods* and *The Idea of a Christian Society*; by the Southern regionalists, including Tate and Warren in much that they have written since their first manifesto, *I'll Take My Stand*; and by Auden in the Herod-as-liberal speech in *A Christmas Oratorio* and in the various reviews urging liberals and reformers to go jumping in the lake.

In this complex of ideas the antisemitism with which William Barrett is principally concerned has a vital part. For these ideas did not originate with Eliot or Pound or Hulme, but with the French reactionary critics at the end of the nineteenth century, and were made into a program of action by Charles Maurras of whom Eliot used to speak with favor in *Criterion* days. Under the influence of Maurras, the virulently antisemitic students of the *Action Française* stormed the Sorbonne, beat up liberal professors, and howled down plays by Jewish writers, as untroubled as their Fascist and Nazi successors by problems of form and content. This mob antisemitism was the antisemitism of Pound's broadcasts when he, like Maurras, became a traitor both to his country and humane culture. (John Berryman's extenuating all this in *PARTISAN REVIEW* by comparing Pound to Roger Casement is one of the more fantastic examples of the way we are all involved.)

Eliot's antisemitism is different in kind but just as essential in his poetry and social ideas. Awed by his great achievements, fearful of showing insensibility, of introducing irrelevant "liberalism," most critics have accepted this in Eliot's terms. As homeless cosmopolitans and usurers, the Bleisteins and Sir Ferdinand Kleins represent the debasements of modern commercialism. As intellectuals, the Jews are the foremost carriers of disintegrative rationalism, earthly messianism. For the Southern Regionalists, Negroes are less interesting ideologically, but equally outside the tradition, and not to be made part of it by any liberal rhetoric.

Here we have not a question of form and content, of purity in

art, but of the requirement of certain social attitudes, particularly ethical and communal ones, for literature, and rejection of certain others. These are programmatic demands, which are quite separable from the real achievements and values which they rationalize or exploit. Such demands can be refuted even by the example of many of the masters these critics claim as their own, and they are inapplicable to whole areas of literary experience which these critics undervalue or ignore. If Ezra Pound's *Cantos* are read with a wider literary and historical sense than the "new criticism" permits, they gain in meaning. As poetry they fail, despite Pound's sensibility. Their incoherence is real incoherence; it is not "achieved form." But against the author's intention they are highly revealing. They are a test case for a whole set of values, and stand self-condemned. They are important documents; they should be available, they should be read. But they deserve no prize.

CLEMENT GREENBERG:

I agree with Mr. Barrett. The Fellows in American Letters should have said more—that is, if they had more to say, and they should have had. As a Jew, I myself cannot help being offended by the matter of Pound's latest poetry; And since 1943 things like that make me feel *physically* afraid too.

I do not quarrel here with the Fellows' aesthetic verdict, but I question its primacy in the affair at hand, a primacy that hints at an absolute acceptance of the autonomy not only of art but of every separate field of human activity. Does no hierarchy of value obtain among them? Would Mr. Eliot, for instance, approve of this for his "Christian society?"

Life includes and is more important than art, and it judges things by their consequences. I am not against the publication of *The Pisan Cantos*, even though they offend me; my perhaps irrational sensitivity as a Jew cedes to my fear of censorship in general, and to the anticipation of the pleasure to be gotten from reading poetry, and I have to swallow that consequence. But I wish the Fellows had been, or shown themselves, more aware of the additional consequence when they awarded their Bollingen Prize. They could have taken greater trouble to explain their decision and thereby spared me, and a good many Jews like me, additional offense. (This does not mean, necessarily, that I am against the award itself.)

In any case, I am sick of the art-adoration that prevails among cultured people, more in our time than in any other: that art silliness which condones almost any moral or intellectual failing on the artist's

part as long as he is or seems a successful artist. It is still justifiable to demand that he be a successful human being before anything else, even if at the cost of his art. As it is, psychopathy has become endemic among artists and writers, in whose company the moral idiot is tolerated as perhaps nowhere else in society.

Although it is irrelevant to the discussion, I must not let fall the opportunity to say at this point that, long before I heard of Pound's fascist sympathies, I was struck by his chronic failure to apprehend the substance, the concrete reality, of the things he talked about or did. I feel this failure in his poetry just as much as in what he wrote about painting and music. As a poet he seems to me to have always been more virtuoso than artist and to have seldom grasped the reality of the poem as a whole, as something with a beginning, middle, and ending. Thus, usually, any line or group of lines of a poem by Pound impresses me as superior to the whole of which it is part. (I would, however, except the "Mauberley" poems and several others of the same period from this stricture.)

IRVING HOWE:

That "a poet's technical accomplishments can transform material that is ugly and vicious into beautiful poetry" is at least possible; but *how far* (as Mr. Barrett asks) he can do so I hardly know. One thing seems certain: Pound hasn't done it. There is nothing very beautiful in "the yidd is a stimulant," though there is in "pull down thy vanity." Pound the crank is only rarely Pound the poet.

Doesn't this split in Pound make possible a justification of the Bollingen award? I think not. I would move beyond Mr. Barrett's question and assume that the *Pisan Cantos* *did* contain the best poetry of 1948. That does not yet settle the question of whether Pound should have been given the award. For while believing in the autonomy of aesthetic judgment, I believe in it so deeply that I also think there are some situations when it must be disregarded.

I am against any attempt to curtail Pound's right to publish, and I don't want to see him prosecuted. (I don't like police measures; and cops aren't qualified to handle poets, not even mad or fascist poets.) I am, however, also against any campaign to condemn the Bollingen judges. What is involved in the Pound case is not a matter for public action but for a dialogue of conscience. But while defending Pound's rights, I could not in good conscience acquiesce to *honor* him with a literary award—which, if you please, must also mean to honor him as a man.

To give Pound a literary prize is, willy-nilly, a moral act within the frame of our social world. To honor him is to regard him as a man with whom one can have decent, normal, even affectionately respectful human and intellectual relations; it means to extend a hand of public fraternity to Ezra Pound. Now a hand to help him when he is down, yes. A hand to defend him from censors, fools and blood-seekers, yes. But a hand of honor and congratulations, no. For Pound, by virtue of his public record and utterances, is beyond the bounds of our intellectual life. If the judges felt that he had written the best poetry of 1948, I think they should have publicly said so—but not awarded any prize for the year. That might, by the way, have been an appropriate symbol of our cultural situation.

My position has, I know, grave difficulties and can easily lead to abuse. Once you consider extra-literary matters in a literary judgment, where do you stop? You stop at the point where intelligence and sensibility tell you to—that is what they are for. But it would be absurd to deny that there are occasions when aesthetic standards and our central human values clash, and when the latter must seem more important. On such painful occasions one can only say: not that I love literature less, but that I love life more. Is there any other way of taking literature seriously?

GEORGE ORWELL:

I think the Bollingen Foundation were quite right to award Pound the prize, if they believed his poems to be the best of the year, but I think also that one ought to keep Pound's career in memory and not feel that his ideas are made respectable by the mere fact of winning a literary prize.

Because of the general revulsion against Allied war propaganda, there has been—indeed, there was, even before the war was over—a tendency to claim that Pound was “not really” a fascist and an anti-semite, that he opposed the war on pacifist grounds and that in any case his political activities only belonged to the war years. Some time ago I saw it stated in an American periodical that Pound only broadcast on the Rome radio when “the balance of his mind was upset,” and later (I think in the same periodical) that the Italian government had blackmailed him into broadcasting by threats to relatives. All this is plain falsehood. Pound was an ardent follower of Mussolini as far back as the nineteen-twenties, and never concealed it. He was a contributor to Mosley's review, the *British Union Quarterly*, and accepted a professorship from the Rome government before the war started. I

should say that his enthusiasm was essentially for the Italian form of fascism. He did not seem to be very strongly pro-Nazi or anti-Russian, his real underlying motive being hatred of Britain, America and "the Jews." His broadcasts were disgusting. I remember at least one in which he approved the massacre of the East European Jews and "warned" the American Jews that their turn was coming presently. These broadcasts—I did not hear them, but only read them in the BBC monitoring report—did not give me the impression of being the work of a lunatic. Incidentally I am told that in delivering them Pound used to put on a pronounced American accent which he did not normally have, no doubt with the idea of appealing to the isolationists and playing on anti-British sentiment.

None of this is a reason against giving Pound the Bollingen Prize. There are times when such a thing might be undesirable—it would have been undesirable when the Jews were actually being killed in the gas vans, for instance—but I do not think this is one of them. But since the judges have taken what amounts to the "art for art's sake" position, that is, the position that aesthetic integrity and common decency are two separate things, then at least let us keep them separate and not excuse Pound's political career on the ground that he is a good writer. He *may* be a good writer (I must admit that I personally have always regarded him as an entirely spurious writer), but the opinions that he has tried to disseminate by means of his works are evil ones, and I think that the judges should have said so more firmly when awarding him the prize.

KARL SHAPIRO:

Mr. Barrett's analysis of the Pound award seems to be on the safe side, but his extension of the official statement of the Fellows makes it clear that we are dealing with the *pons asinorum* of modern criticism.

I voted against Pound in the balloting for the Bollingen Prize. My first and more crucial reason was that I am a Jew and cannot honor antisemites. My second reason I stated in a report which was circulated among the Fellows: "I voted against Pound in the belief that the poet's political and moral philosophy ultimately vitiates his poetry and lowers its standard as literary work." This statement of principle I would place against the official statement of the Fellows, which seems to me evasive, historically untrue, and illogical. That it was a successful device in placating opinion you know. The newspaper editorials I saw all rejoiced in "the objective perception of value on which any civilized

society must rest" and I heard one radio commentator remark benignly that "this could never happen in Russia."

What appeased the journalists must have been their belief that Pound, despite his unintelligibility to them, is on the side of beauty or "technical excellence." The Fellows and the newsmen meet at the point where an unspecified technical excellence is accepted by the lay reader as successful (i.e., "beautiful") poetry. What the journalists think would not matter very much, but Mr. Barrett follows the same line of reasoning. "How far is it possible, in a lyric poem," he asks, "for technical embellishments to transform vicious and ugly matter into beautiful poetry?" Shouldn't the question rather be: Through his experience with vicious and ugly ideas, what poetic insights into our world has this poet given us? Pound's worth as a poet rests upon some answer to such a question.

Another question is well worth asking, namely, how objective could the fellows be in a decision of this kind? If we consider a work for literary merit alone (whatever that may mean) we imply a personal decision to disregard the mythopoeic and moral function of the artist. If Pound had sufficient intellectual honesty, he would be the first to oppose such a criterion of selection.

The jury that elected Pound was made up partly of Pound's contemporaries, those who had come under his influence as impressario and teacher, those who had at some time made declarations of political reaction, and those who had engaged in the literary struggle to dissociate art from social injunction. The presence of Mr. Eliot at the meetings gave these facts a reality which perhaps inhibited open discussion. For reasons of personal loyalty, which one must respect, and for reasons of sectarian literary loyalty, which one may or may not respect, few poets anywhere are in a position to say what they really think of Pound's work. But eventually what the serious well-intentioned critic admires in Pound is his aesthetic integrity. It is curious to see the flower of this integrity grafted onto criminality, but this should not lead us to the conclusion that artists can be criminals without incriminating their art.

The technical charge of treason against Pound is not our concern, but all artists should stand against this poet for his greater crime against civilization. Let the same charge be laid against Stalinist artists. But even if we claim to be objective perceptionists about it, let us at least ask ourselves whether fascism is or is not one of the "myths" of *The Cantos*. Who will deny that it is?

ALLEN TATE:

I do not propose to express any extensive views on Mr. Barrett's article, but rather to set down a brief statement of my own position on the only serious question that it raises.

A few weeks before the Bollingen Prize was awarded some persons of antisemitic feelings expressed to me their alarm lest it be given to Mr. Pound.

Mr. Barrett, it seems to me, goes a long way round, through a good deal of cant and vulgarity (to say nothing of the effrontery with which he invents the "difficulties" of the Fellows in coming to their decision), in order to arrive at the following insinuation: The decision of the Fellows in American Letters of the Library of Congress was dominated by antisemitic prejudice.

I consider any special attitude toward Jews, in so far as they may be identified as individuals or as a group, a historical calamity; and it is not less calamitous when the attitude is their own. I consider antisemitism to be both cowardly and dishonorable; I consider it cowardly and dishonorable to insinuate, as Mr. Barrett does, without candor, a charge of antisemitism against the group of writers of which I am a member.

I hope that persons who wish to accuse me of cowardice and dishonor will do so henceforth personally, in my presence, so that I may dispose of the charge at some other level than that of public discussion. Courage and honor are not subjects of literary controversy, but occasions of action.

FURTHER COMMENT BY WILLIAM BARRETT

I am not a Jew, but surely it must be clear to everyone by this time that antisemitism is a problem for gentiles as much as for Jews. When Jews whom I know and respect feel uneasy, as Mr. Clement Greenberg does, about a public award to Pound, I am bound to feel uneasy myself and to question the judgment of the Bollingen jury. Some of these questions I tried to raise in my brief Comment. Mr. Tate's explosion in reply seems to us astonishing, to say the least. Neither Mr. Auden nor Mr. Shapiro, who were his colleagues on the Bollingen jury, have responded in his fashion; and the fact that among all the foregoing comments Mr. Tate's alone sticks out like a very sore and angry thumb is sufficient evidence that his reply was a complete and unwarranted misconstruction of my editorial, which contained absolutely no

allegation whatever of antisemitism on the part of the judges. The question was, and is, the public wisdom of an award to Pound, and not the private psychology of the judges. It is Mr. Tate who has injected the personal issues. Surely Mr. Tate must recognize that he has a public responsibility to answer, not me personally, but all those people who have not forgotten what happened in Germany during this last War and who, like Mr. Greenberg, feel threatened by an award to Pound. Mr. Tate still has the opportunity open to him to offer a reasoned justification of the award, and we hope that he will do so. In the meantime, his challenge to a personal duel is strictly extra-curricular sport—having nothing to do with the public issue.

The comments explain themselves sufficiently so that it is unnecessary for me to linger in detailed examination of all of them. I should like to confine the rest of my remarks to the statements by Mr. Davis and Mr. Auden.

I agree with Mr. Davis that the context in which this question is raised has to be extended to include the historical circumstances that now condition literary judgment in the United States. What the present controversy demonstrates is that the category of the aesthetic is not the primary one for human life, and that the attitude which holds aesthetic considerations to be primary is far from primary itself, but produced by very many historical, social, and moral conditions. It would be hard to define just what the reigning climate of opinion has become in literary America since the collapse of the 'thirties; but perhaps it is high time we sought to establish a new climate, beginning with a re-examination of some of these "non-aesthetic" bases of literary judgment.

Mr. Auden's letter is the kind of rational, impersonal, and calm justification of the prize that we had hoped to have from Mr. Tate. I respect Mr. Auden's position, but I am not altogether convinced by his arguments. I would agree with everything that he says if the question had been one of censorship. But the question I raised was not one of suppressing Pound's book but of publicly honoring it with a prize. Mr. Auden's jump—"no prize; suppression"—is his own inference and not mine.

This point must be stressed since, as Mr. Shapiro remarks in his comment, some people are glad to celebrate the award for Pound just *because* it seems a triumph of liberalism. Such is the line taken by Mr. Dwight Macdonald, who in an editorial in his magazine *Politics* finds the award "the brightest political act in a dark period." One can be in favor of the prize for Pound and still find Mr. Macdonald's enthusiasm here just a little extreme. I am against censorship in principle even

though in particular cases it might be publicly beneficial, because censorship, once invoked, is difficult to control and therefore dangerous. I think this is as far as liberalism need go. To push it further is to indulge in a bohemian attitude of liberalism for liberalism's sake, which can become as unbalanced as the traditional attitude of art-for-art's sake, or of any part of life for that part's sake as abstracted from the whole. Liberalism is urged here to countenance things that deny its own right to exist—and for no other purpose but to show off. There is a kind of childishly competitive bravado in this need to show that one can out-liberal all other liberals. One step further, and Mr. Macdonald will be seeking out for a prize a *bad* poet who expresses antisemitism just in order to show how liberal he (Macdonald) can be.

Mr. Auden makes his most significant point, I think, when he argues that because evil is a part of life we have often to place great value upon works of art that do express evil attitudes. I agree with him in this, and I also agree that in his example of Baudelaire's *La Charogne* much of the power of this poem does derive from the fact that the poet participates, up to a point, in the emotions of necrophilia. For the aesthetic exploration of his subject matter the poet identifies himself with the emotions he expresses. But I doubt very much that one can call Baudelaire a necrophilist in the same public sense in which one can call Pound an antisemite. Moreover, it seems to me to make a difference that necrophilia (so far as I know) has not been connected in our time with any large political movements, necrophiliac speeches have not been broadcast over the radio, and there are not large numbers of decent people who feel that their lives are threatened by necrophilists. Thus Mr. Orwell's remarks about Pound's broadcasts do not seem irrelevant to the present problem: the antisemitic lines I quoted from *The Pisan Cantos* simply versify statements made by Pound in his broadcasts to the effect that the War was brought about by the Jews, for whose interests American soldiers were being killed like cattle. In comparison, necrophilia still remains a private evil.

Since the discussion has unfortunately brought out some acrimony, I am glad to resign my part in it on at least one note of unqualified admiration—and that is for Mr. Karl Shapiro's comment, which is the kind of courageous and outspoken statement that has become a rare thing on our literary scene. I would agree with Mr. Shapiro that he has made a much better statement of the question of form and content in a literary work than I did in my Comment. I also think with him that fascism is part of the "myth" of the *Cantos* generally—and that it can be found in *The Pisan Cantos* too.

LONDON LETTER

The first warm Sunday at the end of March is the unofficial beginning of Spring. The park smells of new grass, the noise of the mower is heard, the crocus carpets are on display, the boats are set free on the lake, huge crowds saunter up and down in the sunshine, as night falls other cries mingle with those of the waterfowl, contraceptives reappear in the gutters, a body (making the third unsolved murder of Regent's Park) is found in the thirteen-acre garden of Barbara Hutton's featureless house where once the dresses of the ballerinas invited by Lord Hertford, the "Pasha" of the region, moving among the trees all night would be glimpsed by the respectable guests arriving for breakfast. Soon the leaves will be on the trees and the first American writers, on their way to Paris and a summer in Italy, will settle here for a day or two. These early migrants play an important role, for they reawaken the comatose winterbound group of hibernators who have not been able to get away to the sunshine by reminding them that they still have reputations, that although their corporeal selves are bound by drudgery and currency-restrictions to their native soil, their books are free to wander where they will. Let us suppose that a young novelist, we will call him Harold Bisbee, whose first novel so perfectly shaded off the social boundary between the Far and the Middle West, has collected enough prize-money to visit his London and Paris publishers on his way to the island of Procida, goal of so many Near-Far Western friends. What is he going to find here? His first disappointment will be his hotel, for there no longer exists in London a single hotel in which it is a pleasure for an artist to stay. That particular vision of the literary life which was conjured up by Garland's Hotel in Suffolk Place (till a bomb removed it) by the old Royal York at Brighton, or by the Royal Bath at Bournemouth with its memories of Henry James and Gosse, the hotel with its aroma of the nineties, its gilt and plush, its red or green flock walls and mahoganied private sitting rooms where discreet and elderly waiters

serve pints of claret to literary gentlemen, the hotel we have imagined from so many memoirs, where Thackeray called on Turgenev or Conrad on Hardy or Maugham on Max, whose letter-heading plucks our heart in James's letters: Hotel de Russie, Rome; Grand Hotel, Pau; Hotel de l'Europe, Avignon; Hotel de l'Ecu, Genève; when we come to London—ah, Bisbee—it doesn't exist. The best hotels of London are large and anonymous, the smaller ones have all been renovated. The Russell in Russell Square is central for visits to publishers and the place has some Pompeian Art Nouveau and a period flavor, but it is essentially the hotel for Midland business men. The other hotels round the British Museum have had to be completely done over since the Gibraltar refugees or Ministry of Information were there. Of the fashionable hotels, the Connaught has the most atmosphere, but it is rather too chic for a serious young writer. If Bisbee stays at too expensive a hotel he will frighten off the elusive men of letters whom he is here to study, and only the publishers will call. The southern rooms of the Savoy and the northern rooms of the Hyde Park are the nicest rooms in London in summer, or else high up in the Dorchester, but all are expensive and somehow unsuitable. I think that the only place where Bisbee could stay without being disillusioned on his first day would be in one of those bachelor chambers round Clarges or Half Moon Street or Curzon Street, kept by retired butlers. James, I see, lived at 3 Bolton Street when he first came to London in the 'eighties. I expect Bisbee could live there too. Having arrived and unpacked, laid out the cartons of "Luckies" which are to cut his swathe through European society and, alas, taken a pull at the bottle of Bourbon he is bringing over to his publisher, London loneliness will descend on poor Harold. He looks up at the waving maples, the long sad spring sunset, he rings up one or two people who are out and sallies forth to dine alone and collect first impressions. Critical moment. Where will he eat? I can't say I envy him. He should, of course, for that first evening, go to an oyster bar: Cunningham's in Curzon Street (round the corner from his rooms), Wilson's in King Street, St. James's, Driver's or Bentley's or Wheelers and then look in at some "pub"—such as the Red Lion in Duke of York Street—whose interior is a delight. Then it is time to wander sadly home through the asphalt evening, looking at St. James's, the Park, the buses, the prostitutes with their fur scarves and little dogs and back to the inevitable Henry James companion-volume ("When the warm weather comes I find London evenings very detestable") and so to bed. In the morning the telephone at 3 Bolton Street gets busy, his publisher takes him out to luncheon at the Etoile, literary London is at his feet.

What will be his impressions? As he looks round the crowded cocktail party, hugging a thimble of something warm and sweet with a recoil like nail polish remover, he will certainly observe four facts about English writers. They are not young, they are not rich, they are even positively shabby; on the other hand they seem kind and they look distinguished and their publishers look hardly more prosperous and hardly less distinguished than they do. No one, certainly, can be in this for the money. Of the people he most wants to meet there will be a fair sprinkling, for private individuals can no longer afford to give cocktail parties and most writers will not miss this chance of a pleasurable spring reunion. The Sitwells are generally in the country but Mr. Eliot will probably be there accompanied by Mr. John Hayward (Dr. Johnson disguised as Boswell) and they already convey an atmosphere particularly English to the gathering (not angels but Anglicans, as Gregory said). Towering over the rest are Mr. Stephen Spender and Mr. John Lehmann, two eagle heads in whose expressions amiability struggles with discrimination (Bisbee's European visit will largely depend on their summing up). About nine inches below them come the rank and file, Mr. Roger Senhouse, Mr. Raymond Mortimer, Mr. V. S. Pritchett, Miss Rose Macaulay, Miss Elizabeth Bowen, Quennell, Pryce-Jones, Connolly, we all are there. But where is Bisbee's opposite number? Why is Mr. Dylan Thomas still the youngest person present? Where are the under thirties? If Bisbee is observant he will have remarked on the two outstanding peculiarities of English literary life. The absence of young writers at the bottom, the fusion of author with publisher at the top. In such a gathering nearly everyone will have two or three jobs. Authors are either publishers or editors; if they do not edit or publish they will be on the British Council or the B.B.C. Culture is made and diffused by the same people. The cow serves in the milk bar. This explains the amazing coherence of English literary life, which often surprises visitors. It is easy to get ninety per cent of English writers happily into the same room because nearly all work in the same business. Editor-author, publisher-author, B.B.C.-author, in turn the hunters and the hunted, they are in constant communication. Then again, they are nearly all of an age, which is now from about forty to fifty. But the remunerative pressure of culture-diffusion tends gradually to extinguish the creative spark and Bisbee would do well to make a point of never asking these charming, friendly and distinguished people what they are writing now, or what they plan to write in the future. Make clear that you have read our books, at least one of them, that you regard us as authors first and publishers, editors, broadcasters, or village explainers afterwards, and then try to understand

the endless struggle with unfeeling demands for income-tax, with rising costs and standards of living, the impossibility, for English writers, of living cheaply in a sun-warmed cottage by the Pacific, the fatal English mixture of intelligence, administrative ability, humor and good sense with imagination which makes it so hard for us to exist only as artists, to suffer only as artists, to be deprived as artists of the human right to bring up and educate a family. We live here in a time when only successful novelists can make a living by their pens. Poets are doomed; essayists, critics fare little better; biographers may just survive. These mellow, sensitive, elderly and so individual faces who surround young Bisbee are perhaps the last known herd in existence of that mysterious animal, "the English man of letters"—if there are no young people in the group, is it entirely due to the retardation of war, or is it not, perhaps, that there is so little to tempt them?

One might continue the day-dream further. Let us picture Harold Bisbee with his clear eyes, charming mouth, slow western accent, his anecdotes of Cody, Neb., his passion for the 1920's, his success story ties, his Bebop records, his wonderful "trouvaille," James's butler's granddaughter his cook in Bolton Street! Let us picture him really endearing himself to all our tired literary business men and women, who fling open their doors with a welcome they have long ceased to keep for each other, as he in turn slowly falls under the spell of their charm and taste and conversation—that wonderful conversation which uncovers as it proceeds the skeletons of the books they have not written. Might he not find in us the ideal subject—always such a problem—for a second novel? What could be a better field for his energy and powers of analysis than to consider this trusting group of middle-aged friends and discover, quite ruthlessly, what has gone wrong? Was it our schools? Was it our families? Was it the war? Is it taxation? Is it the Socialist Government? Is the Government not socialist enough? Or is it the next war? The uncertainty of living "entre trois guerres"? I see summer coming; Bisbee's ticket to Paris expires; now he's too late for the Pont Royal, now the season at Procida's over; and, lo, the squares and parks of London are thick with golden maple leaves, autumn mists curl through Bolton Street, in leafy Kensington or river-scented Chelsea all doors open to Bisbee. "Yes, I knew Lytton well." "I once met David Garnett." One night an English girl, struck by something poetical in his fading youth, takes him to her bed "*sauter pour miex reculer*," as is the English way, and after talking about frigidity there for an hour and a half she tells him about her former lovers, and bursts into tears. November is here, and all the other prize-winning novelists have returned home. Haggard, unshaven

a fugitive now from his account at Bolton Street, Bisbee walks the streets. He has discovered George Moore. It is by a busman's café in Ebury Street that a good gray head, a hawk-like glance bends over him, one night. "You're Harold Bisbee, aren't you? I used to know your stuff. Been with us a long time now, son, haven't you. Almost one of us. How would you like a job? Publishing—but there's a bit of editing to do as well. Fine. My office, to-morrow, at nine!"

Cyril Connolly

ART CHRONICLE

BRAQUE SPREAD LARGE

It does not seem to have been made quite clear yet as to whose was the decisive initiative, Picasso's or Braque's, in the first years of Cubism. The artists themselves are not too reliable in dating many of the works they did at that time. Braque would appear to have been the first to introduce *trompe-l'oeil* effects, to mix sand with his paint, and to create a collage, but Picasso led the way apparently in matters of fundamental approach, though not always. By 1913 anyhow Braque, I have the impression, was beginning to lose that plastic certainty which (despite, in his own case, a tendency to over-crowd canvases with detail) had enabled both artists to turn out an almost uninterrupted succession of masterpieces in oil and especially collage between the latter part of 1910 and the middle of 1913. Picasso, more sure-handed than Braque to start with, kept this certainty a bit longer and continued to be enterprising, as he showed in his bas-relief constructions and in works that go to the brink of abstraction. It was only with his first brightly colored and more naturalistic Cubist still lifes, painted in the summer of 1914, that Picasso's sureness wavered and these are, almost for the first time, inferior to Braque's production of the same period. The French artist had stayed closer meanwhile to the modes of Cubism already established by the end of 1912 and, though he too began to put some franker color into his paintings, he moved more cautiously and did not return as far to the integrity of the object.

Picasso says that when Braque and Derain went off to the war in August, 1914, his relations with them changed. But we hear also that he and Braque had had a quarrel shortly before that; certainly they have been cool to each other ever since then. Braque was wounded in the head in May, 1915, and over a year later was mustered out of the army. He began to paint again, but he was no longer a leader of Cubism now and had to readjust himself at first by accepting the influence of Juan Gris, whom he himself had led, and at a great advance, before the war. Meanwhile Picasso had continued to paint in Paris and

in 1915 and '16 had executed some of his strongest and most original Cubist works—pictures with full color in a more simplifidly geometric style.

Perhaps the war made no really radical difference in Braque's career. We shall never be able to tell. But it is a fact that his inventiveness abandoned him, and in the years since 1917 he seems to have followed Picasso's lead consistently and without ever regaining the initiative. When Picasso began doing still lifes in a more naturalistic manner Braque did them that way too; when Picasso painted them in vertical format, showing the legs of tables, Braque came around eventually to doing the same thing; when Picasso drew some schematized and rather expressionistic nudes Braque followed suit again; and when, after 1930, Picasso went in for sumptuous color and baroque design Braque once more followed. I do not mean that he followed abjectly; his sensibility, aside from the fact that it functions better with regard to color and the mechanics of oil pigment than Picasso's, has always been independent enough to convert to itself whatever it touched; but he became dependent on Picasso for his cues. And he has since 1917 fallen far short of the Spanish artist, if not in felicity, then in originality, plastic sense, power, and breadth.

All this the big Braque exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (until June 12)—the most comprehensive one ever held—makes plainer than ever. It is a little sad to see, in spite of its splendor. From three ravishing vertical paintings, as great as anything ever put on canvas—"Still Life with Violin and Pitcher" of 1909-10 and the "Portuguese" and "Man with Guitar" of 1911 (in the last two of which, touches of gray heightened with silvery white achieve the perfection of that lyrical quality which is Braque's particular forte)—from these and from the very strict, pure and elegant collages of 1912, 1913, and 1914, there is almost a steady decline (smallish still lifes all in browns, olive greens, blacks, and oyster whites) until 1928, when Braque makes a pronounced recovery in a series of more highly keyed large still lifes, of great magnificence, that take off from an idea originally Picasso's. This recovery continues unevenly into the early thirties, after which the decline sets in again and—in my opinion—remains. The falling off, both before and after the recovery, makes itself felt particularly in small but crucial errors of design or proportion and, to a lesser extent, in the distribution, as distinct from specific quality, of color (blacks, for instance, deadening the picture because they are spread over too large areas).

During all these years Braque's preponderant motif, and that by

far, is the still life. The relative narrowness of his repertory, in means as well as subject, makes an abrupt contrast to Picasso's. And at the same time he remains more consistently a Cubist, seldom attempting to break away from Cubism's fundamental conception of the way to equate the two dimensions of the picture plane with nature's three. As Bernard Dorival has pointed out, the French artist is humbler than Picasso, more aware of his personal limitations, and infinitely less impatient with those imposed by his age. Thus, if Braque has not cut such a figure in the history of art, he has at least been far more loyal to himself.

But has this been enough? Even though we recognize how badly Picasso has served himself during the last twenty years by his refusal to acknowledge his limitations and by his highly arbitrary efforts to show that he can do everything—even then, we cannot excuse Braque. Hasn't he been too comfortable? Could he not have tried to cope with a greater amount of experience than he has? The crisis of Cubism as the great art style of our times justifies these questions, as unjust as they may be to the artist himself.

It is true, of course, that enterprise and adventure in art are no longer as much on the order of the day as they were up until the late twenties, and that the historical conditions that made them so possible then have largely disappeared. Picasso, shutting his eyes to this, has tried, however, to continue programmatically that audacity which, because, no doubt, of the "heroic age" atmosphere that formed him before 1914, seems to him the normal mode of the ambitious artist. And we, with our own notions formed in good part by Picasso's example, tend to feel the same. Actually, I think that Picasso is correct—correct in principle, that is, for contemporary art. Whether history now moves faster than it used to is an open question, but it seems that today more than ever art begins to languish the moment it stops assimilating new experience. It is to the operation of this law that Braque has succumbed, so that his art has fallen to a level far below Picasso's, which while it sins in the opposite direction—by trying to assimilate new experience even when the new experience is not there—does at least seek out every challenge the age can offer.

Braque is essentially a hedonist, conscientious about details, annoyed by larger questions. Since the early thirties he has followed the course typical of such an artist in a period of decadence, when talent is no longer borne up, swept along and extended to its full by collective inspiration: he is content to turn out luxury articles which offer us richness of paint quality and color, but only in isolation, not as integrated parts

of a whole. Look at the last room or so of the show at the Museum of Modern Art. There Braque even abandons Cubism and goes back to something not too unlike the late impressionism of Bonnard and Vuillard, in search of a charm not rightly his. There he applies paint with a clumsiness and a lack of taste and sincerity such as we would have expected of him least of all. The ornateness of color and paint matter is, even as ornateness, mechanical, manufactured; it is the notion, the advertisement, the intention, not the reality of the quality itself (see, for example, "The Stove" of 1944).

It is sad. I become curious as to what Braque thinks of himself now. Is he aware of what has happened to his great gift? What does he feel about his relation to Picasso? Was it the absence from painting which the 1914 war forced on him, his head wound, and his parting with Picasso that made such a difference between the painter of "The Portuguese" and the painter of "The Stove"? Did he need Picasso more than Picasso needed him? Or are his temperament and native capacities, and the turn of the times, the crucial factors—that is, crucial in more than the ordinary sense? Braque's career strikes me as more puzzling even than Léger's (whose importance begins lately to seem even greater than his). How, in the hectic atmosphere of the School of Paris, was he able to avert his glance from so many challenges?

Clement Greenberg

BOOKS

NOTES ON PROUST

THE MAXIMS OF MARCEL PROUST. Edited, with a translation, by Justin O'Brien. Columbia University Press. \$3.00.

THE TWO WORLDS OF MARCEL PROUST. By Harold March. University of Pennsylvania Press. \$3.50.

LETTERS OF MARCEL PROUST. Translated and Edited, with Notes, by Mina Curtiss. With an introduction by Harry Levin. Random House. \$5.00.

Among the books on Proust recently published in this country, Justin O'Brien's *The Maxims of Marcel Proust* has the advantage of directing us to what he actually wrote rather than to his metaphysics or his chauffeur. Risking the charge that he has reduced *Remembrance of Things Past* to a bedside book, Mr. O'Brien has collected certain of the aphoristic passages and printed them under various headings: Man, Love, Art, Society, Time and Memory. The result is unexpectedly attractive. Moreover, as Mr. O'Brien observes in his introduction, the book establishes Proust's tie with the tradition of La Rochefoucauld; but what French tradition *doesn't* Proust recapitulate? Above all, perhaps, *The Maxims* interests us for the skill with which it turns the highly-charged French sentences into finely idiomatic English. For Mr. O'Brien is more impressed than was Scott Moncrieff by the cogent element in Proust's style. (Which is not to agree with Alfred Kazin and others that Scott Moncrieff's was a bad job.)

Despite the spectacular eclipse of Proust's glory in France, Mr. O'Brien continues to admire him openly, if a little elegiacally like the rest of us. Thus he escapes the blight that has attacked certain other learned students of the novelist in this country. The experts are naturally oriented towards France and French opinion; and it has been the misfortune of many of them that Proust's becoming "available for research" has coincided with his fall from grace at home. Thus one of them felt obliged to conclude a laborious study of the extinct master with the forlorn remark that "as a last resort, Proust will always find a place in the marginal anecdotes of literary history." The *marginal* ones, mind you. And from internal evidence I gather that Mr. Harold March was gravely hampered by the same dilemma in preparing *The Two Worlds*

of *Marcel Proust*. Besides being a handbook of data, in which respect it is extremely useful, *The Two Worlds* attempts a critical rehabilitation of Proust, and here it is uneven. His praise is so compromised by caution that Mr. March does not succeed in sounding judicious about Proust: he gives the impression of not trusting him. No embracing notion of the work or the sensibility is forthcoming. Gingerly, as if he were a last year's birdnest, Proust is taken apart, a twig, a straw, a piece of string. Writing about *Remembrance of Things Past*, Mr. March does at least attempt a literary solution of *what may after all be literary problems*—Albertine, homosexuality, snobbishness—but like so many French critics of Proust in recent times, he too often falls back on the scandal and illness of the novelist's personal life. "He had a tendency to asthma and to homosexuality; he rationalized both, but was unable to avoid the conviction that both were in a sense his own fault." Such statements compose Mr. March's final chapter, which he entitles "The Meaning of Proust."

There is enough admirable comment in *The Two Worlds* to suggest that Mr. March is fonder of his author than his own narrow range of critical ideas permits him to show. And it must be admitted that to write in a large summary way about Proust is now a formidable task. It may be several generations before he is appreciated as he was appreciated by his contemporaries, and understood as he was understood by them. Even Johnson could still confidently argue the superiority of Shakespeare's comedies over his tragedies, and vex himself about what strike us today as ghostly issues. In its lesser way Proust's reputation—to the extent that it is alive at all—is now in this fault-finding, this picking-and-choosing stage. Nor do fresh perspectives on the work propose themselves readily; so that Mr. March falls back on stock ones. If, for example, he is capable of saying with a straight face that "We cannot accept his estimate of the prevalence of homosexuality," it is because he is at this point trying to read the novel as "a realistic panorama of society." Its manifest extravagance in social portraiture warns that it is equally a fantastic melodrama of humanity. In the programmatic last volume of the novel, moreover, there is a great deal of explicit clamor against social realism. Finally, Proust's letters return constantly to this same theme.

In her selection of the letters Mrs. Curtiss gives preference to those dealing with Proust's literary plans and tastes. And this seems right, for his personal letters are certainly not of the first order. The best correspondents are apt to be either settled dilettantes like Horace Walpole or confirmed professionals like Flaubert and Lawrence. It was

the essence of Proust's situation that his status and very identity were always in a process of becoming. This necessarily touched many of his relationships with a certain falseness, which communicates itself to his intimate letters. He is at his best when, letting himself go, he sounds most like the author of *Remembrance of Things Past*; as when, addressing his late uncle's mistress, Laure Hayman, he strikes the familiar note of piety towards beautiful women—the *femme du monde* as an historic institution; or when, writing to his mother in 1899, he tells how various noble families are responding to recent developments in the Dreyfus affair. With his mother his ego is at peace and he is almost relaxed; for the rest, his letters are too relentlessly composed, ridden by the leitmotif. In this respect his first schoolboy effort, a set-piece on the theme of passion strangely addressed to his grandmother, foreshadows the important letter of 1914 in which, acknowledging Gide's apology for having rejected *Remembrance of Things Past* for the NRF, he elaborates this Panglossian sentiment:

I have often found that certain great joys require our first having been deprived of a lesser joy, which we had the right to expect and without the expectation of which we could never have known that other joy, the most splendid of all. Had there been no rejection, no repeated rejections by the N.R.F., I should never have had your letter.

His literary letters are a different affair, notably direct and authoritative. Without doubt, as Mrs. Curtiss remarks, he knew that he was suspected by his friends of being an imaginary writer as well as an imaginary invalid. Yet no morbid self-consciousness is to be detected in these sentences addressed to Louis de Robert in 1912:

You know, perhaps, that ever since I have been ill, I have been working on a long book, which I call a novel because it isn't as fortuitous as memoirs (it is fortuitous only to the degree that life itself is), and the composition is very severe although difficult to appraise because of its complexity; I don't know how to describe the *genre*. Certain parts take place in the country, some in one kind of society, others in another kind; some have to do with family life and much of it is terribly indecent.

His comments on his developing masterpiece show how clearly he had its larger aims in mind from the beginning. More interesting, perhaps, are the numerous scattered remarks that define his general sensibility:

What's more, ever since Hervieu, Hermant, etc., snobbism has been so frequently represented from the outside that I wanted to try to show it inside the person, like a wonderful kind of imagination. . . .

I think the importance of art and its superconscious reality prevents certain anecdotal novels, however pleasant they may be, from wholly deserving the rank you seem to give them—so this same reason does not allow me to make the realization of a dream of art depend on material just as anecdotal and too directly drawn from life not to be part and parcel of its casualness and unreality. Besides, put in such terms, the whole thing seems, if not false, at least banal enough to deserve some stinging slap in the face from a resentful existence (like Oscar Wilde's saying that the death of Lucien de Rubempré in Balzac was the greatest sorrow he had had, and discovering a little later, through his trial, that there are more real sorrows). But you know that this banal aestheticism could not be my aesthetic philosophy. . . .

One might, it seems to me, say that you do not lend yourself to the transfiguration intended by the author, that you place the work of art (and it is all the more bizarre since you have very sound aesthetic preferences) on the same plane as everyday life. . . .

Z, delightful writer that he is, wrote me an agreeable but unjust letter. He says: "You report everything!" But that isn't so; I report nothing. It is he who is the reporter. Not once does a character of mine close a window, wash his hands, put on an overcoat, or go through the forms of an introduction. . . .

I have just been reading something very beautiful which unfortunately slightly resembles what I am doing (only it is a thousand times better): *The Well-Beloved* by Thomas Hardy. It doesn't even lack that slight touch of the grotesque which is an essential part of all great works. . . .

As I have implied, *Remembrance of Things Past* continually exhibits distortions, eruptions of the grotesque, excursions into conceit and caricature, diabolical transformations—all of which tend to convert it into something besides "a realistic panorama of society." The few lines from Proust's letters quoted above may suggest a more comprehensive way of viewing the novel. To show snobbism "inside the person, like a wonderful kind of imagination,"—this, in particular, seems to point to depths beyond the "realistic" principle. To be sure, Proust's characters have a powerful existence on the plane of manners, that is, in their relation to the city or the land, the period, the classes and professions, the feudal past, and so on. But their passions give them another dimension; and what are their passions of love or snobbery but perversions, as Proust conceives it, of the imaginative faculty—that faculty of which the free artist—Vinteuil or Bergotte or Elstir—alone knows the proper use? Thus it might be shown that the novel is as much an anatomy of the imagination as it is a natural history of the Third Republic.

F. W. Dupee

KOESTLER AS SYSTEM-MAKER

INSIGHT AND OUTLOOK. By Arthur Koestler. The Macmillan Company. \$5.00.

The author presents in this book "a unifying theory of humor, art and discovery, in which these are shown to differ merely in degree and not in kind"; he also promises an "attempt to show the possibility of a system of ethics which is neither utilitarian nor dogmatic, but derived from the same integrative tendency in the evolutionary process to which the creative activities of art and discovery are traced."

At the outset, one would say that a theory of this kind could not be valid—it tries to bind together in one system too many heterogeneous things: art, humor, scientific discovery, ethics, and, on top of everything else, organic evolution. But, the author would maintain, the attempt will appear impossible only if we assume that there is a sharp cleavage between the dichotomies of the dualistic tradition: such as "nature" and civilization," "fact" and "value," "mind" and "matter." Let us adopt a monistic outlook; then, a common theory of life, art, science and ethics will appear not only feasible but imperative.

The book begins with an analysis of the comic. True to his methodological principle, Koestler sets out to investigate the physiology of laughter. His aim is to discover that type of "stimulus" which is common to all instances of the typical response to the comic, laughter. The search proceeds on two levels: there is a phenomenological analysis of comical, laughable events, situations, and inventions, and a physiological discussion of the corresponding organic processes. And, sure enough, some kind of parallelism does emerge. Phenomenologically, we see a sudden merging of disparate contexts of thought and action which produces a startling effect of double perspective; this is the essence of the joke. Physiologically, we see that some neural process suddenly becomes "separated" from its original emotional charge; this leaves the organism with a surplus of energy which "explodes" in a fit of laughter.

For the merging of two disparate contexts, as a result of which each is endowed with a teasing double meaning, Koestler coins the term "bi-sociation"—his key word for all that is creative and inventive in the life of the mind. Scientific discovery also is an instance of bi-sociation, but produces neither comic effect nor laughter because the emotional charge is absent: this field is "emotionally neutral." But these two do not exhaust the field of bi-sociation. Koestler finds other creative, bi-sociative activities which do have a considerable emotional content, although not in the comic vein—tragedy and "serious" art, for example.

On the one hand, Koestler says, we have emotions of the "hunger-fear-rage" type which are controlled by the sympathico-adrenal system and essentially seek motor outlets, and on the other, sharply distinct from these, essentially contemplative and relaxing emotions which are governed by the parasympathic system. One of the manifestations of the latter is crying, the basic "tragic" type of response.

This distinction between the two main families of emotions is the starting point of a huge generalization on which Koestler builds his unified theory of life and civilization. He takes his two types of emotion to be instances of two antagonistic forces which pervade all biological and cultural phenomena: the "self-assertive" and the "self-transcending" principle. In order to present his unified theory, the author has to show, first, that these two principles can account for the main characteristics of life processes, and, second, that they play an analogous role in cultural processes.

In the biological analysis, the "self-assertive" principle is equated with the differentiation of cells in embryonic development, and the "self-transcending" principle with the integrative trend by virtue of which all parts, no matter how differentiated, function together in a harmonious way. In the analysis of culture Koestler finds that in society, too, the point is to maintain an integrative equilibrium between the "self-assertive" tendencies of the individual and the "self-transcending" principle, the subordination of the individual to the requirements of the whole. When human society reaches maturity, its life will be as harmoniously functional as that of the individual organism. In order to reach this stage, what is primarily needed is a better balance between "self-assertive" and "self-transcending" tendencies. And in this respect, our Western civilization is woefully defective. We emphasize the "self-assertive" trend almost exclusively; our education fosters the competitive impulse and stifles the "self-transcending" attitude. What we need, then, is a social ethics evolved in this grand evolutionary perspective to cure our moral one-sidedness.

What Koestler calls for is by no means merely a more altruistic, more "socialized" behavior; the prototype of "self-transcending" behavior is neither altruism nor love, but self-abandonment in cosmic contemplation. The "self-transcending" emotions do not seek an outlet in motor activity, altruistic or otherwise; they seek relaxation, suspension of activity. Koestler speaks in this context of what Freud has called the "oceanic feeling," oneness with the universe. Aesthetic contemplation is another case in point. What the West needs, then, is not only more social integration and more altruism, but, above all, more contemplation,

a stronger sense of the mystery of the All, richer aesthetic life; in short, an adoption of certain segments of the Eastern way of life. More of the Yogi, less of the Commissar.

This is Koestler's quasi-religious message; and the unified theory—which he promises to elaborate more fully in a second volume to be published in about a year—merely serves to put the message on a firm foundation. We may well ask, however, how firm the foundation is.

To begin with: has Koestler achieved a substantial degree of convergence between the physiological and psychological lines of explanation in his theory of the various emotions? To me it seems that the convergence is more verbal than real. In all essential respects, the phenomenological descriptions of humor and discovery, and of tragedy and despondency, remain independent of the physiological explanation. For instance, what "bi-sociation" means phenomenologically is clear and suggestive enough; but there is no reason why it should be considered either as somehow identical with or as causally determined by the underlying physiological response. This is only natural, since we have at present no way of translating "meanings" into neural phenomena; this is a perennial philosophical problem which neither philosophers nor scientists have even stated correctly, let alone solved. Koestler, it seems to me, has not even come closer to posing the problem in the right way—his basic stimulus-response concepts are too crude for that.

Koestler takes Freud to task for having asserted a dichotomy, a gap between instinct and civilization. "The Freudian view," he says, "... implies a break between the biological and the social series. In the view here presented the two are continuous, and biological and social evolution are manifestations on successive levels of the basic integrative tendency" (p. 214). It may be a comforting thought that evolution, like the French Republic, is one and indivisible, and it is quite true that the societal can at no point simply negate the biological, but I do not see how the "sameness" of the integrative tendency "on successive levels" can be more than a word. What the Freudian view implies may be unpalatable, but we cannot overlook the very massive evidence collected by the Freudians concerning the tremendous shocks and pressures to which the human child is subjected during the socializing process. Civilization emerges from a series of ordeals which are superimposed upon the old and biologically mastered ordeals of organic evolution.

This takes us to the heart of Koestler's theory: his grand conception of ethics and the "mature" society. He assigns to ethics the function of helping towards the emergence of the perfect, the mature society: a super-organism which handles its own societal problems with the same

mastery with which the organism handles its biological problems. It seems to me, however, that ethics cannot live and breathe in this straightjacket.

Ethics is primarily concerned with questions of right and wrong, with what is to be approved and disapproved. Now, to be sure, ethics may ask such questions concerning society as a whole as well as concerning the individual; however, no such question could be asked meaningfully unless we had some independent standard for judging "rightness." Koestler's standard, the super-organism, does not permit such judgments. Let us agree for a moment that the super-organism is indeed the grand *dénouement* of the evolutionary drama. Does the fact that evolution points in this direction determine what we are to consider as ethically good? Are we to adopt evolutionary necessity, "that which represents the higher stage in evolution," as the definition of "good"?

I need not stress how pernicious such a step would be. We simply cannot hand over our conscience to the supposed laws of evolution. Certainly nobody knows better than Koestler what crimes man is capable of committing if he lulls his conscience by the assurance that he is the instrument of Providence or of Evolution. Koestler's evolutionary ethics is not meant to further or condone such monstrosities, but I do maintain that if we want to avoid these consequences, we must have an ethical standard which is not stated in terms of position in the evolutionary series: we need a concept of "better" which is independent of the concept of "later."

What is most striking about Koestler's book is that it is so buoyant and confident on the surface and so defeatist deep inside. He piles one physiological analysis upon the other, as if to say what a brave new world this is—science will crack the secret and then we shall have the key to everything. But the real message is Nietzsche's: mankind as it is, with its uncertainties, its hesitations, its dichotomies, its imperfect truths and imperfect lies, is good for the dustheap. Something better and bigger must come: a Superman or super-society. This is what I would call an anti-humanist attitude.

In his publicistic writings, Koestler fought many a battle for humanism, and I am sure he conceived this book essentially as a basic contribution to the humanist cause. As it turned out, however, the book became a humanistic document only in its more superficial parts. In its decisive aspects, it shows the full impact of the de-humanizing trend of our era.

Paul Kecskemeti

CHOPIN RECONSIDERED

CHOPIN: THE MAN AND HIS MUSIC. By Herbert Weinstock. Alfred A. Knopf. \$5.00.

Mr. Weinstock has resolved the familiar dichotomy of Life and Works in a conventional way, by dividing his book into two equal halves. The Life, we are informed on the dust-jacket, is "colorful"; the study of the music, "distinguished and detailed." An examination of the contents does not completely substantiate these conclusions.

In biographical matters, the author seems on firm ground. His conscientious desire to counteract the great mass of romantic bosh that has been written about Chopin has led him to state the facts as he sees them in a bald, rather pedestrian style. Under the circumstances, this may be considered a good fault. For the most part, the tendency to novelize biography by putting imaginary speeches into the mouths of the helpless characters has been resisted.

But it is in the section of musical analysis that difficulties multiply. Mr. Weinstock makes evaluation of his approach easy by frankly admitting his borrowing of the principles of literary analysis established in the *Lexicon Rhetoricae* of Kenneth Burke's *Counter-Statement*—principles which he has taken over for his own use by merely substituting musical terms for literary ones. He justifies this by pointing out that Burke himself makes "numerous references to music." But that is not enough to justify the direct transfer of his methods of literary analysis to music. Burke uses musical references merely as analogies. Mr. Weinstock conceives his musical analyses within a literary framework—and thereby dooms himself to failure. While he evidently considers his Burkean approach a novelty, it is merely the latest in a long series of more or less ill-starred attempts to describe music in terms of almost every other art. The great need for a methodology and terminology truly adequate to music has been overlooked or misinterpreted by Mr. Weinstock. This would be true even if Burke's methodology were beyond reproach in itself—which it is not. The statement that form is an "arousing and fulfillment of desires" may express one legitimate emotional reaction to form, but can hardly constitute a definition of it. And "syllogistic progression," while an appropriate term when we are dealing with words, in which the "rightness" of the conclusion can be demonstrated in terms of factual subject matter, cannot simply be applied to music (an art without subject matter) without further formalities. We urgently need to know what harmonic and motivic procedures assure unity without monotony, variety without disparity. It is not enough to

have Mr. Weinstock's (or anybody else's) purely subjective reaction that one work "produces the sense of potpourri rather than of integration" or that another section of eight measures "serves its purpose in that time and would have been unwelcome for one measure more." These statements may be perfectly true, but without the requisite terminology to define the formal procedures of music, we have no reliable means of checking them. One could, of course, say that the music "speaks for itself"—but in that case no book at all would have been necessary. As it is, we are confronted with unsupported assertions at almost every turn—propositions without their corollaries. A typical example is this passage criticizing the finale of the E minor concerto: ". . . he held his fancy in the tight reins of an inept conception of the key relationships of the classical concerto, or—more accurately—of the concertos of Gyrowetz, Hummel, and perhaps Kalkbrenner." Which key relationships are meant here? How do the key relationships of Gyrowetz, Hummel, and Kalkbrenner differ from those of the "classical concerto"? (Which "classical concerto"?) Why is Chopin's conception of the key-relationships "inept"? These questions, the responses to which might indeed have produced a piece of "distinguished and detailed" analysis, remain unanswered, and so we are left with nothing much except Mr. Weinstock's personal conclusion that the E minor concerto is a "botched piece," which may or may not correspond to our feelings.

A special merit of the book should not be overlooked. Mr. Weinstock did well to react against that attitude which would fail to concede the possibility of a "bad" work by a "good" composer. Of one minor work he says, "There is no reason, simply because it is by Chopin, for giving it a respect it could not win on its inherent quality." In an anniversary year, there must have been some temptation to make a life of Chopin read like a Chamber of Commerce brochure. Mr. Weinstock's resistance to the temptation reveals a commendable intellectual honesty; one wishes that this might have been paired with a more far-reaching appreciation of the requirements of musical analysis.

Dika Newlin

WEBER AND HOFMANN

MAX WEBER. By Lloyd Goodrich. Macmillan. \$2.00.

SEARCH FOR THE REAL. By Hans Hofmann. Edited by Sarah T. Weeks and Bartlett H. Hayes, Jr. Addison Gallery of American Art. \$4.50.

A circumstance of publication dates has brought about, in these books, the uneasy confrontation of two American painters, both of

them men nearing the age of seventy, and each, in his own way, a significant and unusual figure in present-day painting. But aside from the matter of patriarchal kinship, and a shared capacity for personal enthusiasm, Max Weber and Hans Hofmann could scarcely be more dissimilar. A meeting of David Rose and Stravinsky—though this is possibly a bit unfair to at least one of the men concerned—roughly suggests the approximate atmosphere of dissonance.

Max Weber, the subject of Lloyd Goodrich's monograph, has played one of the most singular roles in American art, having made his debut shortly after the turn of the century as a unique if somewhat unreliable New York advance agent for the most extreme modes then current in Paris. Exposed at first hand to the beginnings of Cubism and to the teachings of Matisse during his years abroad, from 1905 to 1909, Weber returned to the United States to give this country its first taste, however diluted and vanilla-flavored, of European modernism. Of its kind, as Mr. Goodrich correctly points out, Weber's was "the most advanced experimental painting being produced in America in these years." Saturated in Fauvism and in the work of Picasso, but unmarked by efforts to coordinate, resolve, or extend the two (one 1910 painting, for instance, is Matisse almost brushstroke for brushstroke; another, from the same year, is an inferior echo of the figures in *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*), his exhibited productions thus antedated by several years the fireworks of the Armory Show and the revelation of the body of work responsible for Weber's own.

Since that time, Weber has pursued a remarkably steady course of fidelity to the School of Paris as he found it forty years ago—conventionalizing and stiffening Cézanne (Weber's figures in these canvases often seem to be supported from behind like cardboard cutouts used in drugstore displays); importing Futurism, in somewhat the manner of Stella, for accounts of metropolitan dynamism; mixing, during the Depression, a coarse "social content" with Cézannism; and, in recent years, working up a more independent and lyrical freedom of line which has operated largely on Hebraic themes of a pronounced sentimentality. But where Weber's early canvases resemble inferior and off-register reproductions of their French originals, the recent ones, however strident their claims to the spontaneous, are merely thin and embarrassing *caricatures* of Cubism. It is not surprising that Weber is considered so mouth-watering a figure by the art schools and by such institutions as the Whitney Museum of American Art.

If Weber's career has been a coasting on a plateau, that of Hans Hofmann resembles a slow uphill walk, climaxed by a spectacular spurt

to the finish line. Born in Bavaria and subject to the same exhilarating force in Paris that animated Weber, Hofmann moved ponderously, experimenting and studying for years in his search for a highly personal way of seeing—a search well documented by this volume that Miss Weeks and Mr. Hayes have edited. Although Hofmann went through many of the same stages of influence as Weber, these were not permitted to become occasions for submission or stasis. For over twenty years, Hofmann did not exhibit at all; but his ideas, given shape through his long career as a teacher both in Europe and, since 1930, in this country, have probably had more concrete, valuable, and ascertainable results than those of any other figure of the period. There are, for instance, almost no painters of merit among those responsible for the current renaissance in abstract work here—a renaissance beside which our recent literary activity seems doubly wan and disheartening—who are not marked in some way by Hofmann's example; and the indebtedness of several of them is heavy indeed. Hofmann's importance lies in his unrelenting insistence on the seriousness and self-sufficiency of plastic expression and in his insight into the nature of abstract order—insight that has never become hardened into blocks of modernist orthodoxy. The examples of his teaching and ideas are too often employed, mistakenly, I think, as truncheons with which to club his paintings. There is little point in assigning him a numerical rank in a list of the best painters now working, nor does the quality of his work require any defense from me. I merely find it wonderful—a word that still has some freshness because it is not often one can use it these days—to see a man of Hofmann's years producing, with such passion and joy and inventiveness, his finest canvases. One thinks of Yeats, and Schweitzer.

Weldon Kees

HOPKINS AND HIS CRITICS

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS: THE MAN AND THE POET. By K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar. Oxford University Press.

IMMORTAL DIAMOND: STUDIES IN GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS. Edited by Norman Weyand, S. J. Sheed & Ward. \$5.00.

Writing of Hopkins' poems in 1932 after they had been available for a dozen years, F. R. Leavis said: "Even now . . . we see that it is possible for respected critics, writing about them with the consciousness of authority, to exhibit conspicuously in public a complete and

complacent obtuseness, and yet arouse no remark: that is the measure of Hopkins' originality." But in those days an undergraduate caught reading Hopkins was likely to have a copy of *Modern Love* or a selection of Bridges flung in his face by an irate don as an example of the English language in its purity. During the nearly twenty years that have elapsed since Dr. Leavis first noted the melancholy state of things in *New Bearings in English Poetry*, despite a great deal of bad psycho-analytical criticism on Hopkins produced during the 'thirties, there has also been a great deal of excellent evaluation, and one had begun to grow optimistic. But optimism in literary matters is always premature, and Mr. Winters' recent two-part essay in *The Hudson Review* has again made Dr. Leavis' warning very much to the point. The second part of the essay strikes me as chiefly an addition to American humorous literature (if one can forget Mr. Winters' impertinent condescension to Hopkins long enough to smile), but the first part of the essay, which lays Mr. Winters' unmistakably Georgian cards (slyly marked with scansion notations) on the table, is an attempt to lure us all back to a literary scene in which Dr. Robert Bridges is a modestly clothed Colossus and poor Hopkins (whose mind, Mr. Winters believes, maintained at best a precarious balance) an interesting but embarrassing failure who, if one is great-hearted enough, (and never suppose Mr. Winters isn't) may be given a pat on the head for effort. "Who," asks Mr. Winters from an elevation that would make most critics dizzy, "is this man to lead us so far and blindfold into violence? This kind of thing is a violation of our integrity. . . ." Although it's obvious from the essay that Mr. Winters was left behind after all, the answer to his question should be insistent: Hopkins is one of the half-dozen best poets using the English language since the death of Keats. Mr. Winters, true enough, believes that Hopkins deserves a place among the twelve or fourteen best British poets in the nineteenth century, but it would be interesting (perhaps not) to see his list of the others.

With Mr. Winters' essay rankling in my mind I have been able to read *Immortal Diamond* and Mr. Iyengar's book with an enthusiasm I might otherwise have lacked. They are obviously timely. Mr. Iyengar has written an intelligent and compact little book on Hopkins' life and poetry that students should find convenient and useful, but with that kind of recommendation there is no need to linger over it here, except to add that one is grateful, things being as they are, when presses are kept decently and innocently occupied with work like this. *Immortal Diamond* is a more impressive effort, a compilation of twelve essays by Jesuit priests on different aspects of Hopkins' poetry and char-

acter. The work covers a wide range of excellence. Unfortunately one of the essays sounds like a voice from *The Provincial Letters*, and the editor, who undoubtedly knows better, ought not to have included it. Several of the essays are pointless, but five of them represent a trained critical intelligence applied with greater or less relevance to problems in Hopkins' poetry. And there is a good account by Father Carroll of his religious vocation in relation to his writing. Hopkins' vocation has been profitably discussed before—Mr. John Pick's *Gerard Manley Hopkins, Priest and Poet* might be mentioned especially—but its central importance for an understanding of the poems is essential: and particularly the Ignatian character of that vocation, which the present authors are in a position to appreciate. Hopkins, before he became a Jesuit, had contemplated the Benedictines. It would be difficult to conceive of two orders more unlike each other, and Hopkins' early verse has a Keatsian sweetness which might have got out of hand under the more mellow discipline of St. Benedict. During his first year of philosophy Hopkins wrote, ". . . this life here though it is hard is God's will for me as I most intimately know, which is more than violets knee deep." The sweetness was obviously acquiring sinew, and the training of the will, which is the peculiar Ignatian discipline, was also, without his knowing it, training his sense of word and rhythm. His violets knee deep were becoming hardy perennials, and most un-Tennysonian blooms. Father Martin C. Carroll's essay on "Hopkins and the Society of Jesus" is a sensitive account of Hopkins as a Jesuit priest, and no deeper comment on Mr. Winters' clumsiness in dealing with Hopkins' spirituality is needed than what is provided in this essay.

One of Hopkins' great poems is the sonnet beginning, "No worst there is none." Mr. Winters (with a heroism that ought to receive due acknowledgment) undertakes to read this sonnet as a variant on iambic pentameter. When he fails to do so he holds it against poor Hopkins, but fairly admits that "the perversity is equalled by the skill." But he asks: "Skill to what purpose, however? The rhythm is fascinating in itself, but it does not exist in itself, it exists in the poem." But where, except the poem, should the rhythm exist? Criticism that prefers the pleasure derived from a dead metrical scheme to the pleasure derived from a living rhythm in a particular poem reminds me less of criticism than of necrophilia.

It is therefore with a sense of relief that one turns to Father Walter J. Ong's long essay, "Hopkins' Sprung Rhythm." This is the best essay in *Immortal Diamond*, and if it embodies a somewhat tedious inclusiveness, Mr. Winters has convinced me that one will be able to say the

relevant things about Hopkins' poetry without interruption only after every metrical form possible in English has been discussed at length and dismissed. The important thing about Father Ong's essay is that he has a genuinely acute critical intelligence, and his discussion is always directed towards clearing the stage so that those relevant evaluations can be made. As a stage-clearer his work should prove definitive. Near the beginning of his essay he writes: "Hopkins, rhythm and all, had taken up his position at a place over which the living current of the language was moving, when men whom his age thought great were, as it latterly appears, stogged to the right and to the left in drying sloughs. This is what needs explaining. The question is not the one often heard: How did Hopkins break with tradition? Hopkins is in a tradition or he could not have survived. . . . Our question, then, can be put this way: what did Hopkins come upon?" After this, one can follow Father Ong with a sense of security. His conclusions aren't new, but they are right. Years ago F. R. Leavis had written: "For the peculiarities of his (Hopkins') technique appeal for sanction to the spirit of the language: his innovations accentuate and develop bents it exhibits in living use and, above all, in the writings of the greatest master who ever used it." Father Ong writes in this tradition of criticism, and at a time when his services seem to have been needed, for apparently there is nothing that offends a certain type of critic more than a language vitally employed.

Father Raymond Schoder's essay on "The Windhover" is also extremely good. During the past few years there have been a number of conflicting interpretations of this poem. The differences haven't always been deep, and most of these critics managed to give intelligent and sensitive accounts of the poem, and mostly they exhibited a sense of its intrinsic worth. It remained for Ivor Winters to find in it an instance of pathetic fallacy, and in its comparison of Christ with a mere bird (Christ and a bird, Mr. Winters would propound, don't have the same "haecceity"), bordering on the blasphemous. Mr. Winters prefers Thomas Hardy's poem entitled "Afterwards," which describes "the dew-fall hawk." Frankly, in view of his usual critical practice I am surprised he didn't condemn Hardy's poem on the grounds that dew doesn't fall. But in any event, it is amusing to find Mr. Winters, after accusing "The Windhover" of pathetic fallacy, writing a few pages further on (the passage should be read in context for its full richness): "At this present time I own a young dog who seems to me exceptionally beautiful, especially when he is in motion. No less than Hopkins' falcon, he is one of God's little creatures . . . in addition, I am fairly certain that his moral character is more admirable than that of the bird."

But to get back to Father Schoder's essay: it is largely dependent on earlier interpretations (for example, while condemning Empson's brief analysis with what seems to me unnecessary sharpness, Father Schoder's analysis really follows one of the alternative readings proposed by Empson), but it smooths out the differences and makes an important contribution of its own by relating the poem to the meditation on the Kingdom of Christ in St. Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*. Mr. Winters has declined to believe there is any evidence for accepting a relation between "The Windhover" and St. Ignatius' writings, but Hopkins was not only thoroughly a priest, he was a Jesuit priest as well; and if anyone believes that the imagery of chivalry running through "The Windhover" (it is in some respects in the same tradition as Campion's boast) is unrelated to the symbolism of Jesuit spirituality, why clearly that man has never seen a Jesuit. Hopkins doubted if Dr. Bridges ever had, and Mr. Winters leaves no doubt that he has never seen Hopkins, but probably he is happy enough to be in the same boat with his favorite laureate (they work together in fact). At any rate, Father Schoder's reading, as far as interpretation goes, seems to me the last word.

To conclude: *Immortal Diamond* as a collection of essays is badly planned. The Terrible Sonnets are oddly neglected; but the three essays mentioned here should certainly be read. As for Mr. Winters, he ends up by selecting his five favorite poems from Hopkins, and they are pretty much the ones you would have expected. But I was genuinely surprised to find Hopkins' school-prize poem, "The Escorial," missing from the list.

Marius Bewley

THE DISCRIMINATIONS OF MR. LEAVIS

THE GREAT TRADITION. By F. R. Leavis. George W. Stewart. \$4.50.

It would be hard to over-rate the importance of Mr. Leavis' book for the present time. The critical problem of the novel is stirring once more, and unless Mr. Leavis is simply ignored, it will be impossible again to deal with the English novel, as we have in the past, as if the great novelists of its central tradition did not exist, as if, consequently, freaks and fakes like Djuna Barnes and Ronald Firbank were serious matters, authentic minor novelists like Virginia Woolf major novelists. There is probably a real risk that Mr. Leavis will be ignored; he has all the thorniness and some of the real defects of the man who is hell-bent on

doing us all good. He talks much too much about the "adult" and the "mature" mind when he only means his own, and is especially insistent on this identification when he is attacking some writer like Thackeray who is conventionally respected; he refers with uncalled-for scorn to "the reader whose demand [does not go] beyond 'the creation of character' and so on" and who therefore likes Trollope; he allows himself to be romantically ironic about readers who make so bold as to be offended by these habits.

But if his manner is not exactly ingratiating, its final effect is to convince you of his earnestness and honesty. His opening sentence—"The great English novelists are Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James and Joseph Conrad"—is perfectly calculated to evoke protest. Actually it means only that the major form of the novel is—using the term in its widest sense—the novel of manners and that Mr. Leavis proposes to define the precise nature and value of this form by careful analyses of those novels of Eliot, James, and Conrad which most clearly display them. Assertions such as "... to appreciate [Jane Austen's] distinction is to feel that life isn't long enough to permit one's giving much time to Fielding" have an unpleasant air about them of the intellectual YMCAer, full of a suspicious enthusiasm for muscular intellectualism and high thinking. But this is only Mr. Leavis' unhappy way of saying how fine he rightly thinks Jane Austen; he admires Fielding quite as much as any reasonable man ought to. He does not mean to sneer at Trollope; he is only—and quite rightly again—disturbed by the people who think Trollope the equal of Jane Austen.

What emerges from his book for the sympathetic reader is a man of good sense and fine judgment who has applied himself with great earnestness to the task of discriminating the supremely good in the novel from what is merely good and has, in the process of explaining his discriminations, outlined a serious critical conception of the novel. All this is effected in the most impressive possible way, by eminently sensible yet sensitive and intelligent discussions of the particular novelists Mr. Leavis is concerned with. What is perhaps most impressive of all about these discussions is the fine clarity and conviction with which he distinguishes the precise critical grounds of his judgment. So close and sympathetic is his reading, so unrelenting his care to judge and evaluate, so ranging his power of controlled comparison ("I don't know that I wouldn't sooner read through again *Clarissa* than *A la recherche du temps perdu*.") that it is hard to believe his book has an equal anywhere in the criticism of the novel. No one to my knowledge has ever so clearly separated what is valuable in George Eliot's work from what is not or has specified quite

so clearly in just what way her best work is good. Whether or not you share his preference for the James of *The Bostonians* (he calls *The Bostonians* one of "the two most brilliant novels in the language") to the James of the "major phase," the analyses of the two Jameses is brilliant and sympathetic. You may feel that his inclusion of Conrad in so exclusive a company is as much a product of accident as of a thorough consideration of alternatives, but you will find his analysis of *Nostromo* hard to dissent from.

If Mr. Leavis is impatient of the critical sloppiness of amateurs like Lord David Cecil, he has at least earned, by his own care, the right to be so; if he is consistently hard on "charm" and on fiction—like the bulk of Dickens and all of Trollope—which seems to him insufficiently concerned with his kind of "criticism of life," he certainly convinces you that the fiction he prefers is very good indeed. The combined effect of all these qualities, the fine, admirably committed critical powers, the precision of principle, and the delimiting manner, is probably best summed up by a quotation. This is Mr. Leavis on *The Europeans*.

The Europeans (as the very names of the characters suggest) is a moral fable. It has suffered the same fate as *Hard Times*—for, we have to conclude, the same reasons; the critical tradition regarding "the English novel"—if "critical" is the word—deals in the "creation of characters," measures vitality by external abundance, and expects a loosely generous provision of incident and scene, but is innocent of any adult criterion of point and relevance in art. (It can give us Thackeray as a major novelist.) So when it is offered concentrated significance—close and insistent relevance to a serious and truly rich theme, it sees merely insignificance. Yet this small book, written so early in James's career, is a masterpiece of major quality. . . . It may be suggested that a comparison with *The Europeans* helps us to define the unsatisfactoriness of *The Spoils of Poynton* (1896), a novel that contains so much that is strikingly good. In this latter book James has not been closely enough controlled by his scheme of essential significance, but has allowed himself to over-develop partial interests, and to go in for some free—that is, loose—"representation."

Arthur Mizener

STORY OF A UNION

UNION GUY. By Clayton Fountain. The Viking Press. \$2.75.

Union Guy is a document of our times. As a book, it falls into two parts. The opening chapters, which are the most interesting and personal, tell of Fountain's early life as a farm boy, a young worker and a vagrant. The latter part, treating of the rise of the UAW, and of its inner politics and factional struggles, is more generalized and reads like a newspaper

account. These parts of the book contain much valuable information about the history of the union, the victory of the Reuther Caucus, and the Reuther program; but the autobiographical quality of the earlier portions is sacrificed. This information about the UAW-CIO should be more widely known because of its position, not only in the trade union movement, but also in American life. The UAW now has a membership of about one million, and within its ranks one will find every race, creed, political tendency and political splinter in contemporary America. It represents a merger of social ideas and social power, and has become one of the strongest democratic forces in the United States. Engaging in a dual struggle, it has won victories over some of the most powerful industrial empires in the world, while within its own ranks, it has successfully coped with the problems of Stalinism. At its Atlantic City convention in November, 1948, the UAW repudiated the Communist Party more completely than ever before in the history of the American labor movement. Today, powerful and militant, it is one of the forces offering some hope of genuine progress, some vista, in Sandburg's phrase, of "the lights beyond the prison."

The history of the UAW-CIO is also the life story of hundreds of thousands of union guys, and of the sense of dignity, confidence and social idealism which they have begun to develop by building their union. Clayton Fountain's book is a part of that history. It describes the personal and political history of one young worker and his union. It recounts but one of the many stories which go into the making of a dynamic, militantly democratic and progressive union which is affecting the political, economic, social, and cultural life of the country.

Twenty-one years ago, Fountain, a boy of eighteen, wanting money, excitement, and experience, stood in line with other recruits at Packard's, waiting for his first assignment. After his first day's work he went home, groggy, and exhausted. His dreams were full of scenes of work. He awoke, "still dazed and groggy." This experience can be multiplied endlessly in the lives of the auto workers. None of them ever could have dreamed or imagined that they, together, would become the progressive force they have become, and that they would contribute toward the creation of a new and fighting tradition in this country. *Union Guy* is a document which tells a little of this story, and suggests to the reader how it all happened. It ends in an affirmation of the Reuther program, and an account of its development. It is a program which, let me add, I consider to be the basis for any constructive and concerted progressive political action at the present time.

James T. Farrell

TO SAY AND SAY NOT

THE MELODRAMATISTS. By Howard Nemerov. Random House. \$3.00
THE GIRL ON THE VIA FLAMINIA. By Alfred Hayes. Harper & Bros.
\$2.50.

If Howard Nemerov has not written an autobiographical first novel in the usual anecdotal sense, he has at any rate written the life- or case-history of his tastes, attitudes and imagination. His book reminds me of Dewey's definition: "That which distinguishes an experience as aesthetic is the conversion of resistance and tensions, of excitations that in themselves are temptations to diversion, into a movement toward an inclusive and fulfilling close." Mr. Nemerov's excitations are irresistible and charmingly autonomous, which makes this novel—brilliant and provocative though it is—a technical "failure."

Studded with Rochefoucauld-like definitions, maxims and epigrams, *The Melodramatists* is nothing less than an allegory of the collapse of bourgeois society. The Boynes are a Back Bay family; when Mr. Boyne goes mad, he and his wife move to a sanatorium, and his ungoverned daughters and son begin their unimpeded search for a Way of Life. One daughter becomes the mistress of a voluble psychoanalyst (the scientific way); the other proposes to join the Catholic Church (the theological way); and the weak son joins the Canadian Air Force (discipline, bureaucracy, channelized aggression: the totalitarian way). The theologically-inclined daughter is persuaded by the Church to rehabilitate twenty whores in her house. These whores are made to represent the undirected love loose in the world, a dangerous cargo in the bowels of the Ship of State, one whose unmoored shiftings can throw the ship off course or even sink it. They are supposed to be under the supervision of two nuns, but they are actually controlled by one of their own group, an old madam, Mrs. Fosker, who is a modern Machiavellian. In a *coup d'état*, Mrs. Fosker locks the son and daughters in a room under the armed surveillance of her accomplice, the butler. Here, imprisoned by Love, together with a priest, the psychoanalyst, a romantic young historian, and the son's wife who has turned whore too, they hold a Huxleyan seminar on love, while downstairs Mrs. Fosker stages an orgy of commercialized love for the first citizens of Boston. The scientifically-inclined daughter forces the butler to shoot her (suicide of the ruling class via the confused and involuntary revolt of their servants). After her death (through the insufferable intensity of love-for-its-own-stripped-sake), and after the wrecking of the family mansion (the bourgeois structure) by the incidental ravages of run-amuck love, the other sister, converting her

religious impulse into art, sits at the harpsichord and plays a fugue amid the tinkle of T. S. Eliot's broken glass on the keys.

Misdirected love is a destructive force according to Mr. Nemerov, and in his own case his love of ideas and the embroidering of them often manages to destroy the structure of his novel, to say nothing of his syntax. And as one ever-so-slightly inclined toward the scientific way, I find his psychoanalyst-hero much too profligate in both his behavior and his turns of thought.

After Mr. Nemerov, Mr. Hayes seems aphasic, but his silence is not so modest as it appears. With it, he is trying to say so much more; it is Hemingway's heavy aposiopesis, the deafeningly tacit. When he uses phrases like "she was good to be with," "it was going to be all right," the vagueness of the expressions carries a connotation of ineffability as well as a presumption of archetypal familiarity. There is ostensibly no need to define how or precisely why she was good to be with, or exactly what was going to be all right in which sense. We are supposed to recognize these phrases as denoting basic and immediately felt instinctual gratifications. The awkwardness of "good to be with" derives—accidentally, like so much of literary convention—from Hemingway's skillful translations of Spanish and Italian syntax into English; the "it was going to be all right" from his emergency atmosphere of wounded soldiers, big game hunters, or matadors. Mr. Hayes's usage of them amounts to an annoying substitution of misappropriated literary conventions for the rendition of experience.

The Girl on the Via Flaminia is about an American soldier in Italy who "buys" an Italian girl. It is supposed to be a love story with political overtones. Actually, it is an inadvertent study of the conflict between a passionate, world-wide xenophobia and the American soldier's compulsive need for female companionship under the guise of affection. To be in a clean room, in a bed with "real pillows" and an ostensibly loving girl with "wonderful shoulders" is for him not love, sensuality or even comfort, but a kind of paradigmatic situation, symbolic of security, acceptance and belonging. And to say that the Italians hate him as a conqueror is putting too fancy an interpretation on it. They hate his sentimentality, and they hate him reflexively, just like that, for simple differences, just as he, in turn, hated them, as well as the French, the British, the Russians, and everyone else he encountered abroad.

Anatole Broyard

VARIETY

THE H**GHT**N M*FFL*N FELLOWSHIP

The mailman has been here again. As always when he feels that he produces something which will make an imperative demand upon my attention, he pushes the bell, firmly, so that its unexpected sound in the winter stillness erupts in both rooms with a spectacular clamor. (A considerate silence accompanies all communications from societies for the election of Swedish politicians and unsealed letters which begin "My dear new friend" and suggest that I present one hundred dollars immediately to the undersigned chairman.) He has become familiar too, with my manila envelopes. Someday I shall tell him that I am not *half* so pleased as he, in his innocence, to see them in my mailbox.

Originally, many years ago, before we bowed on the stairs, Mrs. Eberhart, The Explorer of the Unknown World of the Psyche, and I—our bells became intermixed and that is how I met the mailman. I was constantly hurrying down the stairs to find that her box, open and unprotected (I must admit that I looked into it, for since my

bell had been rung, my mail had obviously been placed there by mistake), was filled with fat Occult magazines dealing with the perignations of the celestial bodies and bulging letters from someone called R. U. Plume in Minneapolis, Minn., while mine was empty with that particular emptiness specific to steel boxes. Occasionally he would still be there. He is a gentleman, our mailman, soft-spoken, clean, and very reserved. About him I know nothing but that after the last war (the *first* last war, that is—our generation gives itself away by these stubborn identifications) he remained in France under the illusion that a colored man who had studied there would find a whole new world waiting for him in the United States when he returned. That he had been lonely there, speaking his groping French, sitting in the Luxembourg, a reticent young man, even then distinguished by his gentility, was apparent to me, but that isolation when he expected nothing more was but the negative of the full-length portrait of loneliness which was developed when he returned to his own country. Now he has forgotten most of his irregular verbs (while I have never really learned mine) and we are careful not to embarrass each other by even a jocular attempt to speak French. We feel our ability *almost* to do so as a cultural bond between us.

Today he left me a H**GHT*N

M*FFL*N Fellowship application blank. He was delighted. "It's only an *application*," I tell him, but he smiles gently as though he knows better, and obviously feels that they wouldn't even send me the blank if they didn't feel I had a chance of being chosen. I don't want this illogical reasoning to be contagious. Nevertheless, we are both impressed by the envelope and for a moment, on my way upstairs, (the book has conveniently completed itself, I have acquired an immoderate poise and can drink cocktails all evening without becoming melancholy) I see the contents six months hence:

"We wish to inform you that your novel has been selected for the 1948 H**GHT*N M*FFL*N Fellowship Award."

(Here they suggest that I fly at once to New York to be presented with the money. An error, since I know it is paid out piecemeal by the month, but I want all that money at once so that I can feel my whole body relax—what rigor insecurity gives us—and to buy, I am afraid, one superb black dress in which to meet Jean Stafford, James Agee, and see all the films in the Museum of Modern Art.)

"May we add that we have rarely (or . . . never?) read a manuscript which depicted so brilliantly the serious problems of our time."

Even I cannot accept this. It is, unfortunately, not my book they

are talking about at all, but the book I *intended* to write. I have been led away out of momentum into another arena. A clothes closet, really. You get the effect of muffled voices and people scuffling around trying to get out. Like all traps, this one demands their full attention. They have become quarrelsome in their concern with minor details of escape and precedence and have quite forgotten the world outside.

I am back on familiar ground. For I don't think this at all—just as much as I do think it.

Death is the only theme which really interests me. I want to write a classic study of death. To have seen many people die builds up in

one an absolute compulsion, despite one's lack of listeners, to tell what it does to all of us. "People don't want to read about death," an editor told me, "It depresses them."

I hit the radio as I come in and pass it. It is infirm and someday will fall apart under this ruthless therapy. But now it revives and the announcer says, "The news is brought to you eight times daily by Goldberg's Fashion Forum, where Men and Women Keep Their Reputations For Being Well-Dressed." Now in the silence left by this statement, enters like a balm the Bach "Arioso."

I am still experiencing my new-found Fame and Fortune. I have

just entered a restaurant and on all sides (the Symphonic Hour lends itself to the part of my mind which evokes these pictures, not to the scene itself, where some band would, of course, be playing a rhumba) the patrons whisper as I go by with my publisher and a reporter from *Life*, whom I treat lightly, "There goes the winner of the H**GHT*N M*FFL*N Fellowship Award. How beautiful she is!"

Reason, from whose glutinous arms I never completely stray, tells me, of course, that these people at those tables would never have heard of the grant and wouldn't be aware, nor care, that I had received it if they had, and that in

this brittle, competitive field I wouldn't draw a glance, but as I have just awarded myself what is to me a fortune, and the honor of receiving it, I extend benevolently the singular beauty which would embellish it.

The blank destroys all these illusions. It is businesslike. A witness-stand scene with a lawyer who refuses to let one explain (and one could! one could!), but demands a simple "yes" or "no" to the most complex and incriminating questions. This paper is detached from any part of the creative process. One feels, reading it, the intolerable demand for all one's undesirable secrets. What college? it asks. What has one published? *Where?*

and I begin instantly to qualify it. I went to school to Tchekov, Dostoyevsky, Mann, Mallarmé, Celine, Gide, Silone, Tolstoy, Freud, Flaubert, Proust, Joyce, Pascal. One feels resentfully that caste is being brought into it, that it is simply none of their damned business. An irrelevant detail which will be held against one. One cannot get over it. Those people who floated through school like impervious bubbles! Who haven't picked up,

in their relief, anything more complicated than the *Ladies Home Journal* since they left. What are the great writers to them? the great issues?

I realize precisely and with a slight boredom beyond the stale defenses why I feel as I do. I should have gone to university simply to rid myself of this reaction of inferiority. But anyway, I still cannot agree that the question is appropriate or necessary.

I am on a bed of nails. While one spike just along the sternum still penetrates with a preposterous pain, that one so slyly placed exactly in the center of the heart presents its message.

One is forbidden to detail the writing successes one *almost* had. (Nothing is said, but one knows without being told that it wouldn't do.) The tentative interest sug-

gested by editors, the warm praise, or better, the restrained but equalizing invitations to come back, which permit one to believe in poor timing, poor conception—anything but a lack of ability. To be valueless!

But like a loyalty check which proves one's record criminal when one knows the record of innocence, one's life turns up on this blank

of theirs a poor thing. A shabby delineation of poverty and evasive opportunity. Defeats on a Photomaton picture, staring at the pitiless camera under the hard lights.

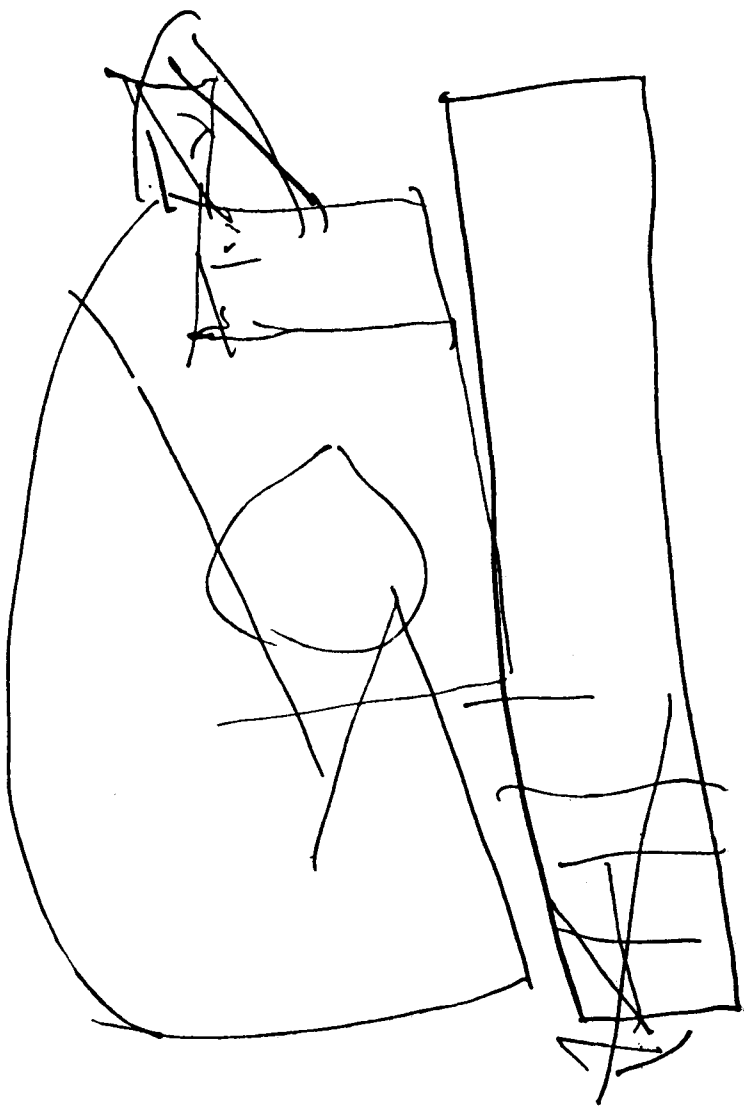
One feels stripped, in the cruel depression which is the gift of occasions such as these. And no one wants to be judged naked! That exposure without the subterfuge and adornment which make us acceptable to ourselves and others cannot be borne! Who can stand facing the world like that, telling about our failures, sagging here, one shoulder lower than the other? The scar that was there before one knew it, the rough skin at the knees? Only clothing and deliberate forgetting permit us to contemplate perfection and feel that we approach it. All our lives we delude ourselves with the future, *not* the past. In childhood with its braces we look to youth for fulfillment of our demands, and youth with its awkwardness throws us fearfully into maturity, where we search frantically for the satisfaction *which is supposed to be here!* and which most of us never find, except in the swift passage, in which we dream we are loved, through the inscrutable heart of another.

Therefore, when one has pushed the defects in here and there, covered a cut with a bow, explained everything to oneself, it is too cruel to ask one to undress all over again and be judged. This is what I am

now, one wants to say. I want to be honest and I am. I value honesty. Ask me the truth now and I will tell it to you.

I wish to forget the past. Like all guilty dreamers, I want to be newly judged every day.

Bernice Bergstrom



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ROBERT MOTHERWELL. The Sailor's Cemetery. (China ink, 1948)